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MIPCOM—The future of boys action, keeping up with tech trends in TV **p84**

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October 2014



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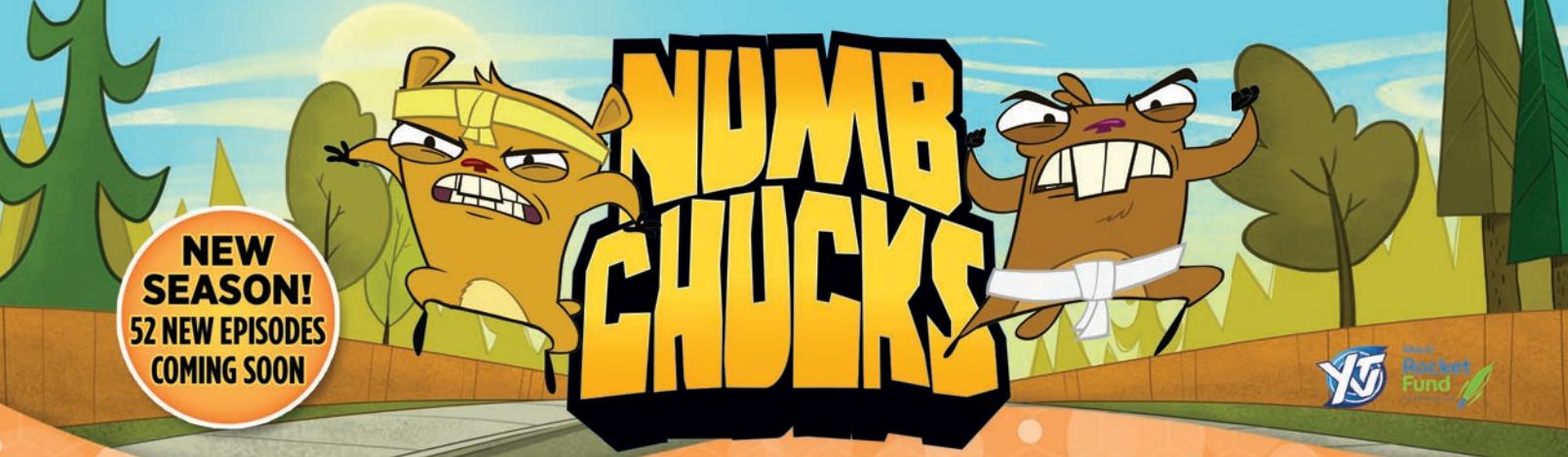
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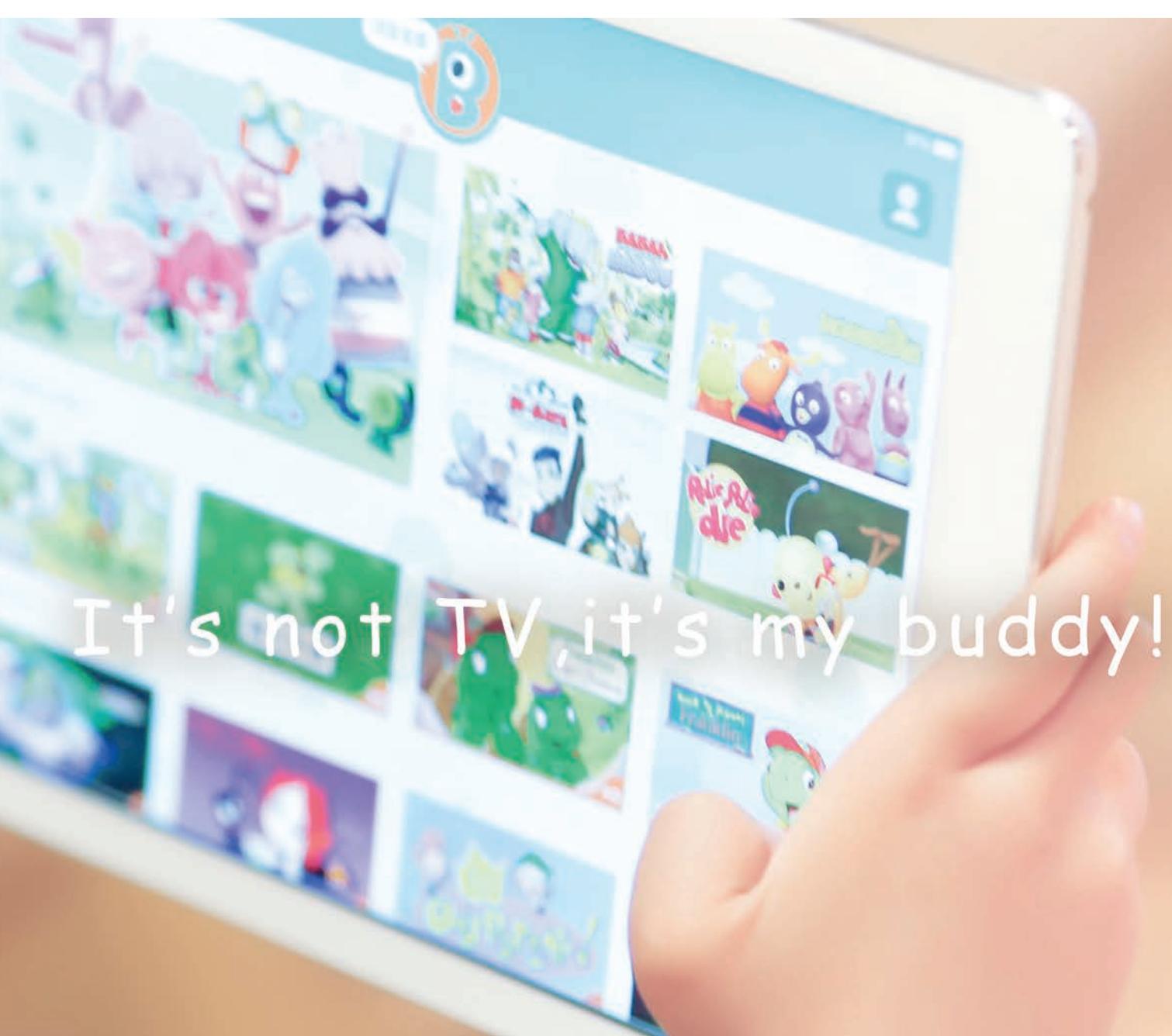
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I stand corrected

When looking at a new property, I have a pretty good track record when it comes to predicting hits or misses. *Peppa Pig*? I first saw her at Brand Licensing 2003, and knew that kids were going to love her. As the IP celebrates its 10th anniversary (see "Nothing to snort at," p.68), I can say now that I was right. Then there's *Minecraft*. Microsoft just forked out US\$2.5 billion for the gaming phenomenon. Boy, I did not see that one coming.

potential and overall awesomeness. I began to nod off. In fact, over the course of that hour-long session, I struggled to stay awake. What. A. Snore. It looked to me like this achingly slow-moving thing with 8-bit graphics and primitive digging tools. How on Earth did he come to the conclusion that kids reared on state-of-the-art CGI, Xboxes and instant gratification would love it? I was sure he was just another out-of-touch academic spouting off from his ivory tower. Again—I was so very wrong. (Apologies, Dr. Drew.)

Maybe it's because such a big chunk of their lives, including their playtime, is so prescribed, but as it turns out, the game's wide-open play pattern and design palette were exactly what this generation of kids was craving. *Minecraft* started to catch on in late 2011, then it migrated to mobile and console game platforms and quite simply exploded. It was everywhere, all the while embedding itself in the hearts and minds of kids the world over. By 2012, kids were demanding licensed products, which Mojang was reluctant to give them. In fact, when *Kidscreen Daily* published news that Jazwares had been granted the *Minecraft* master toy license in April 2013, we received several calls from licensees of all stripes desperate to be put in touch with the reclusive Swedish company. At the time, Mojang was actively resisting commercial overtures, fearing that managing a large licensing program would distract it from the ongoing development of the game. In the end, it turns out that *Minecraft*'s monumental success proved too much for its creator and Mojang founder, Notch. According to the company's website, "He decided that he doesn't want the responsibility of owning a company of such global significance."

Well, Notch now has the financial freedom to create a thousand more *Minecrafts*, if he chooses. But I do wonder what it will mean for the game's free-form spirit and now somewhat ironic anti-commercial stance. There's a lot of pressure to make *Minecraft* earn out that Microsoft spend. Will it lead to uber-commercialization as some have feared? Licensed versions of the game, film and TV expansion, and a consumer products palooza immediately come to mind. Or will Microsoft let it keep doing what it does best—inspiring kids' imaginations and their rabid devotion? I hope it's the latter, but I've been wrong before.

Cheers,
Lana



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 moves

The List

Five things on our radar this month

1 One toyco to rule them all

Everything “business, business, numbers” for Lego continues to be awesome as the Danish toymaker edged out Mattel in early September to become the world’s largest toyco in terms of revenue and profits. Lego attributed much of its accomplishment to the global success of *The Lego Movie*, which has earned more than US\$468 million worldwide and spawned a plethora of playsets, a theme park, a videogame and a slew of branded merchandise. Its expertise in co-branding (Star Wars, Marvel and DC), interactive investment (new *Lego Game Creator* app and Mixels IP with partner Cartoon Network), and stellar content creation (*Ninjago*, *Legends of CHiMA*) have also helped contribute to the company’s surging popularity. Whether or not it can maintain its lead remains to be seen, but as long as open-ended, creative play patterns for kids stay relevant, it wouldn’t be shocking to see Lego keep its crown.



2 A bit of a Milkshake-up?

With the news that Viacom has finalized its purchase of British free-to-air broadcaster Channel 5, and announced its first kids co-production (*Nella the Knight*) with Channel 5 preschool block Milkshake!, will UK-based indie producers and broadcast competitors have reason to cheer or fear? Viacom says it aims to grow Channel 5’s original programming pipeline with more UK commissions and acquisitions, but just how its new buying power will play out remains to be seen.



3 Toying with sales growth

In the face of declining book sales and an inability to gain traction with its Nook eReader, Barnes & Noble found growth via an unlikely source—traditional toys. From Lego to dolls, the retailer’s toys and games sector grew 19.5% in its most recent quarter, compared to a year earlier. Target’s new CEO, meanwhile, recently highlighted children’s toys and clothing as areas that will get extra attention moving forward—now that’s a welcome change.



4 Cashing out

Just when you thought Disney couldn’t make it any easier for consumers to part with their money, the House of Mouse has partnered with Apple to use Apple Pay to enable cashless payments in Disney theme parks and stores. In a US\$1-billion investment, Disney will roll out the service this December, letting customers pay for holiday goods using their iPhone 6 or Apple Watch instead of credit cards.



5 Radical retail

In a novel move, US retail chain Kohl’s is turning to a non-linear network to draw tween and teen girls into its stores. DreamWorks-owned YouTube channel AwesomenessTV is stepping into L&M, and leveraging its tween/teen appeal to co-create the S.o. R.a.d. fashion line and companion web series *Life’s S.o. R.a.d.* for Kohl’s. It’s too soon to gauge performance, but it’s a good test of the virtual platform’s potential power in the real world.

To keep up with the news as it happens, check out kidscreen.com daily.

Home to stay

New prez **Christina Miller** takes the reins at Cartoon Network



After months of speculation about who might get the job, Turner president David Levy named Christina Miller as the new president and general manager of Cartoon Network, Adult Swim and Boomerang in mid-July. It's something of a homecoming for Miller, who left the CN fold in 2011 as SVP of Cartoon Network Enterprises to become general manager of NBA Digital and SVP of Turner Sports. At press time, she was just a few weeks into the new job, but took some time to give us the low-down on her plans for CN moving forward.

What made you want to return to Cartoon Network?

The opportunity to lead Turner's Kids and Young Adult business is an incredible one in its own right, and it takes on an even greater meaning for me, returning to the network that first brought me to Turner. I'm excited by the opportunity to help grow the business and realize its full potential on a global scale.

What are your immediate priorities in the new role?

My immediate focus is to build and extend our brands, establish a strong global franchise management structure that will best position our networks and brands for success across all facets of the business—specifically on-air, digital and consumer products. There's a great team of people in place across the network globally that's focused on achieving that goal.

The lightning round... with Christina Miller



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What do you see as the biggest challenges for the network in the year ahead?

While I see it as a growth opportunity more than a challenge, I think we're all focused on growing our audience in all measurable ways—be it through ratings performance, digital engagement and innovation, consumer products success or global reach.

What did you learn from your time at Turner Sports that you think will be valuable to your new role?

There are a lot of similarities between the two roles, actually. While with Turner Sports, I was fortunate to work with and alongside fantastic brands and partners that encouraged innovation and collaboration, and we were able to generate some strong results. I see a ➤ **CONTINUED ON PAGE 32**

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Open for business



Ex-ITV consumer products exec Jean-Philippe Randisi looks for international growth as Zodiak Kids' new CEO

Now that the has settled after a major leadership restructure within Zodiak Kids and its subsidiary production companies Marathon Media (Paris) and The Foundation (London), new CEO Jean-Philippe Randisi has his sights set on a number of key goals. Securing more international co-pro partnerships, finding new creative talent and increasing cross-platform distribution are all on his to-do list.

Randisi took some time to chat with *Kidscreen* about his new role, the importance of hiring veteran leaders like Michael Carrington (The Foundation's new CEO) and his plan to re-establish some lost credibility on the French side of the production business.

How have your first few weeks been?

So far, it has been quite good. There is a lot of work to do on a number of projects, but I like that. Zodiak has been going through a lot of changes in the last year, and as usual, it starts with the not-so-good things like cutting costs and reducing the size of the teams, but from there it is about re-building. Part of the transition requires scrutiny and attention so that people don't feel lost in the process, but at the same time it is a way to start fresh. Having Michael Carrington join was the first sign of that.

What are your immediate priorities?

First, to make sure we are more disciplined financially and organizationally. There is a need for a certain amount of consolidation to be more efficient. Second, to ensure we attract creative talent so that our production companies can thrive and grow. Michael was a first step in that direction, and I want to make more hires like that in the future at different levels. Third, to be open-minded from a business model point of view.

It's just as important for growth as creativity. We want to work with prodcos that are in the process of financing projects that require the help of a European production partner. We don't want to initiate projects and move forward with broadcasters as a sole approach to the business. There is still space for us to work on our own projects from start to finish, but I want the company to be more flexible.

Why did Zodiak Kids lose some credibility on the French side of the production business?

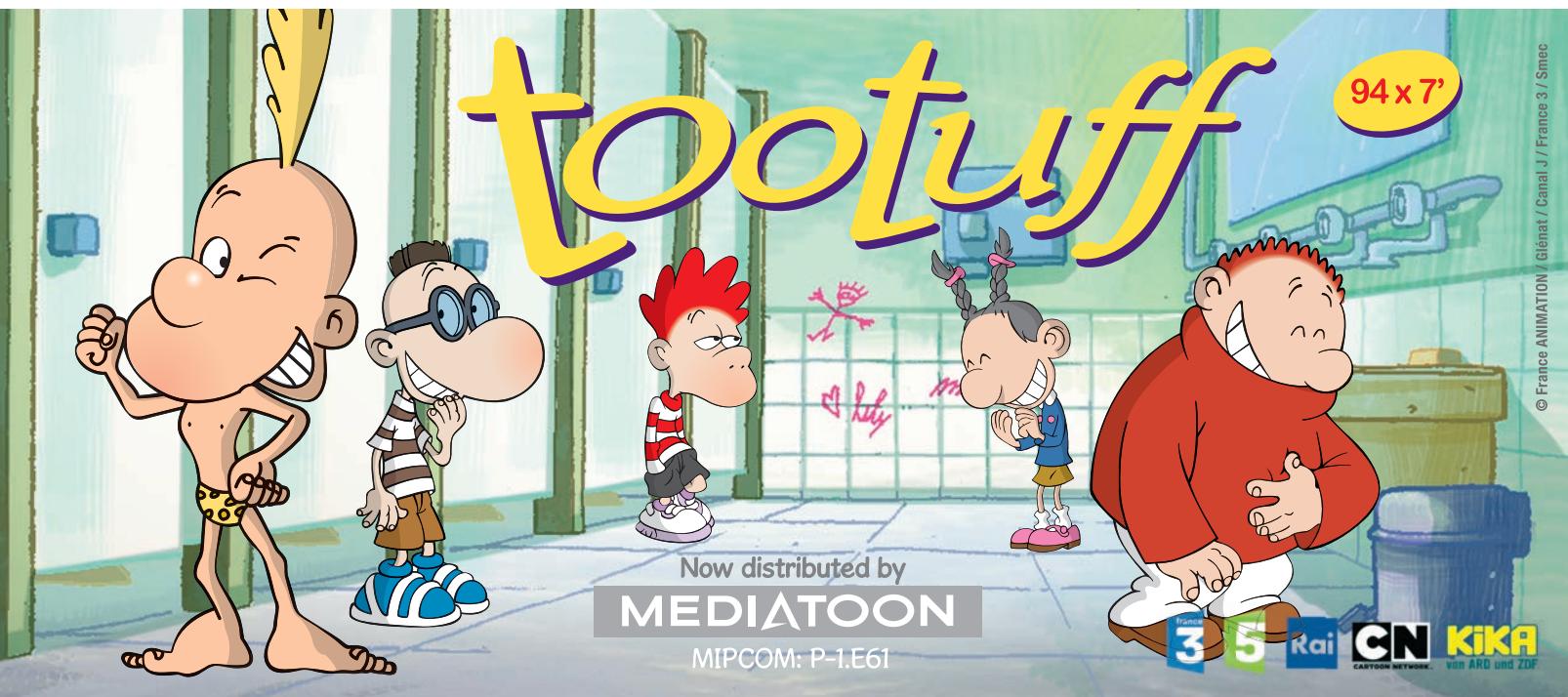
There was a perception that people couldn't talk to Marathon or Tele Images about projects because they wouldn't be interested. I want to change that. We are genuinely interested and want to work much more with the industry as partners—not just with broadcasters, but with other producers, toy manufacturers and digital companies, too.

Zodiak's global distribution continues to expand. Recent content deals include MBC3 (Middle East) and Ciwen Media (China). What's next?

It is critical for us to be more relevant to more international markets and platforms. We've just announced a large content deal with Al Jazeera that covers a number of our properties. We are also going to distribute content from Amazon Studios, and that will be one of the highlights of our stand in Cannes.

What types of productions are you looking for?

We are looking for balance across the portfolio. One IP that we really want to nurture is *Mister Maker*. In the current landscape, there aren't so many shows dedicated to arts & crafts. But how do we define how to make it more international? This is the exact type of dilemma we have with some of our properties. —Jeremy Dickson



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Chicken Invaders in Space is one of several shows in the hatch at Cake Entertainment

Hungry for content

After leading a management buyout, Cake Entertainment looks to finance new projects

Three years ago, London's Cake Entertainment sold a majority stake in its company to Madrid-based Zinkia Entertainment. While the two kept their own management teams and identities, they were both affected by Spain's 2012 recession. Times were tough. After failing to renegotiate a US\$3.36-million loan, Zinkia went into administration this past February.

"Having access to working capital and getting financing from banks had been impossible," says Ed Galton, CCO and MD of Cake. So in July, Galton and fellow Cake principle Tom van Waveren repurchased Zinkia's 51% stake in their company.

With all legal and commercial ties from Zinkia severed, Cake is now launching two EIS (Enterprise Investment Scheme) companies that will each be funded with approximately US\$8.1 million (£5 million) to co-produce and finance new projects.

The company has had some success with EIS shows like *Angelo Rules*. Co-produced with French animation studio TeamTO, the series was recently greenlit for a third season of 52 new eps by France Télévisions, and broadcast deals are in place with Cartoon Network International and Super RTL. "[EIS] allows us to help producers get their shows made with our involvement," Galton says. "In turn, we'll act as executive producers on those projects, and we then have the distribution rights down the road."

Keeping its focus on the kids space, Cake is already co-producing several new shows with partners across the globe. *Cheese Toastie Brain Monster*, created by Paul McKeown of One Hand Clapping, will be co-produced with Canada-based Jam Filled Entertainment and Ireland's Cartoon Saloon, and is in development for Teletoon Canada. *Herb & Ray's Yum*, created by Stu Connolly from Australia's Sticky Pictures, is in development with ABC Australia and Disney XD in the US. *Chicken Invaders in Space*, meanwhile, comes from Mexico's Anima Studios and is in development for Disney EMEA. Then there's *Bottersnikes & Gumbles*, another new show from Sticky Pictures. A development partner has been lined up, but the deal had yet to be finalized at press time.

Even with all that in the hopper, Cake is now on the lookout for more co-production opportunities to further spread its new financing around. "We're an open shop at this point in time," Galton says. "We don't have a formula in terms of specific content that we need. We don't have a check list. It's all about what we respond to both emotionally and creatively." —Aaron Hutchins

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Cottonwood Media opens its doors

Former Marathon boss David Michel launches a new indie prodco to focus on creator-driven content

After 15 years at Marathon Media and Zodiak Kids, David Michel stepped away in February to focus on becoming a father for the first time. He also planned to create a new independent production company focused on developing premium, scripted children's content for North American and European audiences across linear and non-linear platforms.

The result of his plan is Cottonwood Media, a newly launched company with offices in Paris and Los Angeles.

"When I left Marathon and started working on Cottonwood, I was seeing two things. The US studio way of producing, which is very talent-driven, and the co-production way, where the talent doesn't usually come through—meaning you don't know who created the shows," Michel says.

"The executive producers become the decision-makers along with the channels. It results in average shows, more often than not. We've done co-pros that have performed very well, like *Totally Spies!*, and others that suffered for this very reason. So I wanted Cottonwood to be really creator-focused and US-driven."

With support from private investors and his own pocket, Michel's Cottonwood officially opened in September and announced its first projects—two animated TV series in development based on Random House Children's Books properties Ollie & Moon and Squish.

Ollie & Moon, a book series created by US author/illustrator Diane Kredensor, blends 2D designs with real photographic backdrops and follows the globetrotting adventures of two feline best friends.



An animated TV series based on Random House book series Ollie & Moon is in the works at Cottonwood

Cottonwood, in partnership with Kredensor's Tricycle Films, is adapting the IP into a 52 x 11-minute comedy series for kids ages three to seven and has signed on Robert Vargas (*Wonder Pets!*, *Word World*) to executive produce.

Squish, a comedic/slapstick graphic novel series for six- to 11-year-olds, comes from bestselling children's author Jennifer Holm and creator Matthew Holm. It's a survival story featuring a young amoeba that must navigate life in the cutthroat world of single-cell organisms.

Both projects will be presented at MIP Junior. Michel also has plans to develop live-action programs and is currently in discussions with YouTube on a possible kids channel.
—Jeremy Dickson

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The company behind global gaming phenomenon Angry Birds is switching up its management team. After five years of leading the company, **Mikael Hed [A]** will leave his position as Rovio Entertainment's CEO in January. Upon stepping down from the chief exec position, Hed says he will still play an active role in the company. For one, he has been appointed chairman

growth under Hed's leadership, the company recently announced that its profit fell by more than half in 2013, from US\$76.8 million in 2012 to US\$37 million.

Meanwhile, MarVista Entertainment has signed on two new sales executives as part of its push into the European market. **Rod Rodrigo** and **Andrew Whiteman** will join the entertainment studio as

London-based ITV Studios Global Entertainment as its EVP of kids content and distribution. Green will oversee L&M operations, as well as commercial and programming activity. Most recently, he was a founding partner at Corinthian Entertainment, a company that launched in 2011 to provide operational support for the development of entertainment brands. Its clients include

resurfaced at a new production company. Pickard, who stepped down as CEO of Zodiak Kids UK and chair of The Foundation earlier this year, has come aboard as a director at new UK-based content company Dial Square 86. The hire reunites Pickard with Dial Square's chief executive David Frank and director Matthew Frank, former heads of Zodiak Media and Zodiak Rights,

retirement after he exited his position as COO and co-founder of Ludorum in June 2012. He previously spent 37 years in the business, including a 15-year stint at HIT Entertainment.

Over in Cologne, Germany, pubcaster WDR, a regional affiliate of ARD, is looking to strengthen its kids division. The company has hired **Stefanie Fischer [D]** as its head of

people



of Rovio Animation Studios, where he will oversee series and film production. Incoming CEO **Pekka Rantala [B]** is a marketing industry veteran who joined the Finnish company's executive team earlier this year. Most recently, he was CEO of Finnish beverage company Hartwall. Prior to that, his experience includes more than 20 years at Nokia, where he worked his way up to SVP of marketing worldwide. Despite Rovio Entertainment's incredible

directors of distribution, working out of the London office. MarVista's current library of TV and film content exceeds 2,000 hours, with distribution in more than 125 territories worldwide. Rodrigo's new role will see him concentrate on selling to the UK, Scandinavia, Benelux, Greece and Turkey. Whiteman, meanwhile, will focus on Germany, Eastern and Central Europe, Russia and the CIS.

In a newly created position, **Steve Green** joins

BBC Worldwide and Egmont Books. Prior to Corinthian, Green helped launch China-based publisher of digital games and mobile entertainment Galleon Holdings as its CEO. His key focus is this year's reboot of the Thunderbirds franchise. The rejuvenated series is slated to air next spring, shortly after the UK world premiere, which comes 50 years after the original one debuted.

On the topic of UK-based moves, former Zodiak Kids boss **Nigel Pickard [C]** has

respectively. Pickard starts the new job on November 1, focusing on identifying and/or attracting "opportunities among producers, rights owners, talent and other content players in the family entertainment and kids space both in the UK and worldwide." Dial Square 86 has also hired another kids TV vet, naming **Charlie Caminada** as a director. The appointment sees Caminada come out of

content with a focus on the global distribution of its children's programs, as well as new content acquisition. Fischer, most recently the content sales director for German broadcaster ProSiebenSat.1., is responsible for strengthening WDR's content offerings, mainly through the development of international co-productions, and the global sale and distribution of broadcasting rights.

For more People Moves, head over to kidscreen.com/category/people-moves

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WORK IN PROGRESS

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

similar opportunity with our kids and young adult business.

Part of your mandate is to better align CN's global business. What are your priorities on that front?

Across all divisions and teams at the network, our collective focus is on working more closely than ever at being strategically aligned with a single global point of view through every aspect of our business. We know that we can take every advantage of leveraging the scope and scale of these brands in all territories with great content and strong franchise management, so it all starts there.

What brands in the CN portfolio do you think have been under-exploited?

I wouldn't say that they have been under-exploited, but I do think the franchise and growth potential for such shows as *Adventure Time*, *Regular Show*, *The Amazing World of Gumball*, *Steven Universe*, *Uncle Grandpa* and *Clarence* is even more than what has already been realized. On a separate note, Boomerang, on its own, is a brand that I do feel we can and will be doing much more with to take advantage of its multi-generational appeal globally.

—Lana Castleman

On the circuit

Notes for the industry travel diary

December 3 – 5

Asian Animation Summit • Hanoi, Vietnam

www.asiananimationsummit.com



Heading into year three, Kidscreen's Asian Animation Summit has earned its reputation as great place to discover the region's best new animation concepts first. This year's event, taking place in Vietnam's beautiful capital city, promises to give attendees the earliest look at 24 outstanding development projects from Australia, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand and beyond. New this year, a Wild Card program gives all animation studios based elsewhere in Australasia a chance at being selected to present a project.

February 14 – 17

Toy Fair • New York, New York

www.toyfairny.com



Toy industry players will be flocking to New York early next year for the 112th annual American International Toy Fair. As one of the largest toy and youth product marketplaces, the event is expected to bring in close to 1,200 exhibiting manufacturers, distributors, importers and sales agents to showcase products to nearly 10,000 buyers. In addition to showcasing the year's most innovative new products, Toy Fair also offers an educational program designed to help toy inventors and designers, licensors, independent and specialty retailers, and many more players grow their businesses and identify the biggest toy trends of the year.

February 23 – 26

Kidscreen Summit • Miami, Florida

summit.kidscreen.com



Stow your parka and grab your t-shirts. The 16th annual Kidscreen Summit is moving next year to Miami, Florida. The kids entertainment industry's biggest gathering of the year, the Summit attracts content creators, producers, distributors, broadcasters, digital media operatives, licensing professionals and marketers working on intellectual properties for kids. Last year, more than 1,600 attendees from 47 countries were privy to high-level networking opportunities, insightful panel discussions and debates, inspiring keynotes and, of course, industry parties.



A full listing of Industry Events is available at kidscreen.com/events

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As a kid, **Russell Hicks** aspired to be a book illustrator until family friend and Disney animator Ward Kimball suggested a career in animation. Let's just say the advice stuck.

Staying inspired by artists everywhere

The gig Nickelodeon's president of content development and production, overseeing the live-action and animation development and production teams for all of the company's content platforms and across the network's channels—Nickelodeon, Nick at Nite, Nick Jr., Teen-Nick and Nicktoons.

Finding a path Growing up in Southern California, Hicks had an early affinity for cartoons and animation, especially *Looney Tunes* and *Bob Clampett's Beany and Cecil*. But at the time, according to Hicks, there were only two places animators could get work—at Disney or Hanna-Barbera. "I didn't think of animation as a career option, so I initially had my heart set on being a book illustrator," says Hicks.

His parents, who resisted his artistic desires, eventually directed him to family friend and Disney animator Ward Kimball, who turned him on to animation.

While studying illustration and design at California State University Fullerton, Hicks worked as the Jungle Cruise ride operator at Disneyland and fell in love with all aspects of animation, from TV shows and movies, to licensing and the consumer products side of the business. Upon graduation, Hicks faced a bleak job market in the mid '80s as a result of a major industry strike. "It was the worst time to start a career in animation because there were no jobs," he says.

To make ends meet, Hicks worked a number of odd jobs and continued to hone his skills by taking classes through the animation union and at Hanna-Barbera. He then met with Ruby-Spears and Hanna-Barbera designer Rick Gonzales, who gave him advice on his portfolio and suggested a second meeting after the strike. In the meantime, Hicks says he did a lot of life drawings of animals, spending every day after his job at the L.A. Zoo sketching.

But it didn't turn out all bad. "After the strike, I saw Rick again and he said I was the only person who ever took his advice so he hired me," says Hicks. "Getting your first job is always the biggest challenge. Rick was a great mentor and really helped me get settled in the business."

Professional moves Hicks got another big break when Gonzales turned down a character-design job offer from World of Wonders (the makers of 1980s hit talking plush toy *Teddy Ruxpin*) and offered it to Hicks instead. "It was an amazing property for me to cut my teeth on," he says. "I met some of the smartest people I've ever met in my life there."

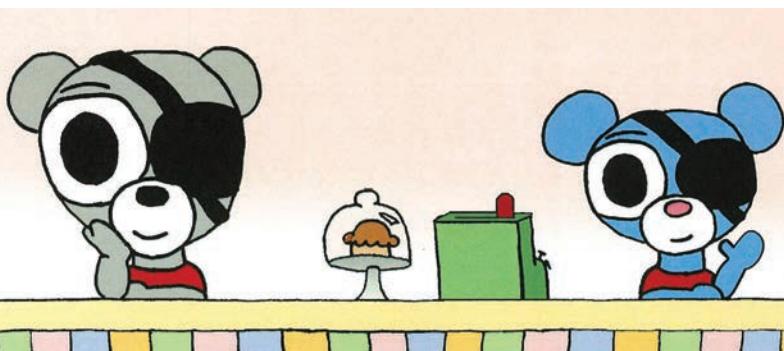
During his time at World of Wonders, Hicks also came to realize that he was better suited to managing and working with artists than he was to being one. "I knew I wasn't the best at drawing, so the transition from being on the board to managing artists was a path I needed to take—and I'm glad I took it," he says.

Today, Hicks says he is inspired by every artist he works with, especially those working on Nickelodeon's latest shows.

He's also impressed by the college kids who he sees as part of Nick's student outreach initiatives. "I have a lot of faith that the next generation will create some amazing work," he says.

As for what it takes to be a great leader in the business, Hicks says striving for excellence with every job, communicating honestly, helping artists own their work, and positioning things positively are among the keys.

"A lot of people like to tell you what's going wrong, but it's always good to hear what's going right, too." —Jeremy Dickson



Cupcakery of Doom is the first open Comic-Con pitch to get a greenlight from Nick and Hicks

Out of Office

Tales from the frequent fliers club



Richard Barry

VP and creative director, Nickelodeon International

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2. My go-to gadget

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3. On the fly

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4. Preferred in-air tunes

Springsteen. So much Springsteen. (But not the sad songs—see above.)

5. Best in-flight food

A burger and a beer at the bar on Virgin Atlantic (somewhere over the pacific).

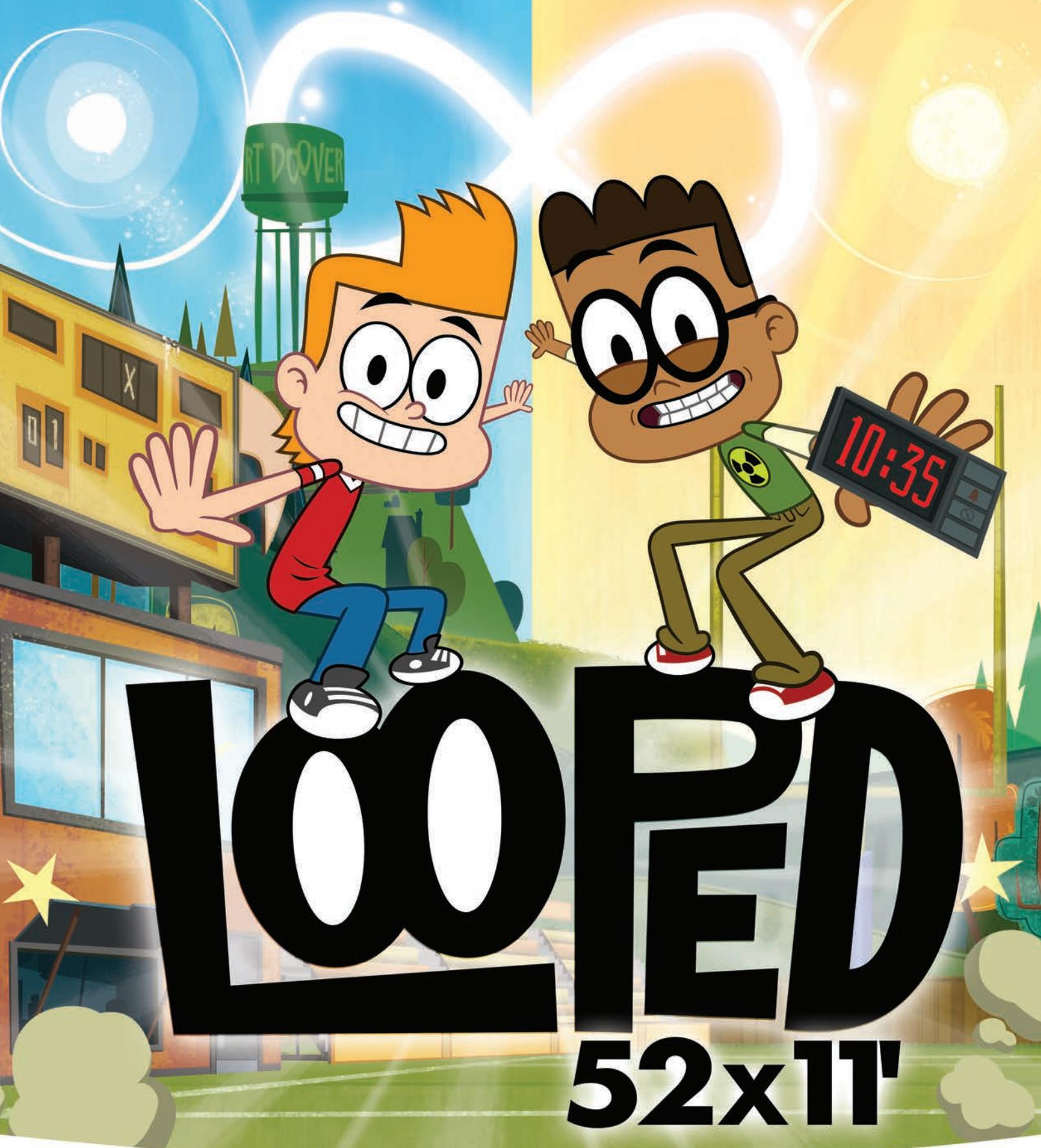
6. Best power lunch

Kebabs at the ITC Grand Central in Mumbai.



7. Window or aisle?

Surprise me. But not with a middle seat.

A vibrant, split-screen illustration of two cartoon characters from the show 'Looped'. On the left, a blonde boy with a wide, excited expression and a red armband on his right arm is leaning against a yellow school bus. On the right, a brown-skinned boy with glasses and a wide, happy smile is hanging from a green pole, holding a digital clock that displays '10:35'. The background features a water tower labeled 'ART DOVER' and a large sun-like object in the sky.

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Out of the fire

Canada's Big Jump Productions leaps into proprietary content

Who Brothers Rick and Cory Morrison along with founding partner Rod Amador launched Big Jump Productions in 2008 as an independent 2D-hybrid animation service facility in Ottawa with the capabilities to produce content for any age demo across any platform. The company got its feet wet with local service work, including the fourth season of Ottawa-based Amberwood Entertainment's *The Secret World of Benjamin Bear*, which sold to Disney Junior.

"We started out keeping about 30 to 50 people busy, but then in 2010 we lost our facility after a fire destroyed the CTV building where we were located," says Big Jump president Rick Morrison. "We had insurance, fortunately, so we used it to re-invent ourselves and moved into a larger, more technologically advanced facility with new hardware and software. It was the silver lining under a grey cloud."

Now able to accommodate more people at the executive and development levels, and provide new facets of production at the compositing and editing stages, Big Jump is continuing its third-party service work while plotting a move into original production.

Branching out With its reputation for high-quality service work, the company has grown its partner and client list on the kids and family side of its business to include the likes of DHX Media, Nickelodeon, Teletoon and Nelvana. Its work on Amberwood commission and seasonal special *The Magic Hockey Skates* has contributed to a primetime hit for CBC in Canada, and Big Jump just wrapped season two of animated series *Wild Grinders*, a co-production with Telegael and Top Draw Animation in partnership with L.A.-based Home Plate Entertainment and Rob Dyrdek's SuperJacket Productions.

Its current focus, however, is on *Shutterbugs*, another Amberwood partnership and Big Jump's first original property, co-produced by Singapore's Infinite Frameworks and created by Big Jump's EVP Cory Morrison and Amberwood's Craig Young and Michael Milligan.

Thanks to a development deal with TVOKids in 2013, the 52 x 11-minute, science- and math-themed animated preschool series is currently in production (episodic design and scripting) and will be distributed internationally by Toronto, Canada-based Tricon Kids & Family.

British Columbia's Knowledge Kids and Société Radio-Canada (SRC) for French-speaking Canada have also picked up the series, which follows the adventures of Flick the firefly, an investigative reporter, and his friends Horace the horsefly and Opal the spider. Big Jump expects to deliver the series by late fall or early 2015.

What's next Looking forward, Morrison says Big Jump aims to cross-promote *Shutterbugs* in the interactive space with digital support from Canadian broadcaster Bell Media. "*Shutterbugs* would be our first in-house developed app, and we plan to launch some simple, online Flash games, too," he says.

Additionally, the company is in negotiations with Australia's Carbon Media to co-produce a new preschool series based on the Indigenous literacy-themed book *Too Many Cheeky Dogs*, and it's jointly developing content with Paris-based Gaumont Animation with an eye to co-produce. —Jeremy Dickson



Science- and math-based preschool series *Shutterbugs* marks Big Jump's first foray into original content development and production

Know your audience

By Jim Benton

"You do realize that at this rate it could take you all day to teach us everything, don't you?"

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Gortimer Gibbon's Life on Normal Street is Amazon Studios' first submission from an amateur creator to get a full series order

Beyond the norm

Amazon gets experimental with *Gortimer Gibbon's Life on Normal Street*

BY JEREMY DICKSON

When Amazon Studios announced it was getting into original content development for television two years ago, using a unique crowdsourcing pilot program and an open-door submission process, it was a bold vision aimed squarely at the Netflixes and Hulus of the online streaming world.

A year later, Amazon's first original productions (adult-targeted comedies *Alpha House* and *Betas*) debuted exclusively on the retail giant's Prime Instant Video service. Both received relatively good reviews, but have so far failed to make a big impact.

With the notable success of darker fare like *House of Cards* and *Orange is the New Black* from Netflix, it wasn't surprising to see Amazon greenlight more mature, dramatic shows (*The After*, *Bosch*) in its second pilot season in March. It also announced plans to invest US\$100 million in original content in the third quarter of 2014. (Like Netflix, it still won't release audience figures.)

While time will tell how its new crop of adult-oriented programs will perform, Amazon may soon see greater success in the kids space. Its first three original kids series, *Annabroids*, *Creative Galaxy* and *Tumbleleaf*, premiered this summer. *Gortimer Gibbon's Life on Normal Street* and *Wishenpoof!* were greenlit for full series production in round two this spring, and six more kids pilots (four animated, two live action) were lined up in August.

The bigger production slate has seen the company's Santa Monica, California-based kids programming division scale up under the direction of Tara Sorensen, VP of children's series

DIEGO *de la Vega*



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development. "The teams have increased to handle the volume, not only in kids but also across our half-hour and one-hour primetime groups," Sorensen says. "We have a production team now and everyone is in one location. Christina Reynolds is our development exec for live-action six to 11, Melissa Wolfe handles animation six to 11, and Monica Dennis is our point person for preschool shows."

The larger team may be something new, but Sorensen says what hasn't changed is the focus on guiding creators who have strong visions for their shows. "We are not here to say, 'Let's make that character a girl or a boy.' The viewer data we collect and the comments we look at help inform the shows that are right for us, so we know before optioning a show whether or not it could resonate with our audience," she says. "I don't want to dilute a creator's vision. I want to help them understand our customers better and how their projects can become a bit stickier with our audience."

The studio's strategy of allowing Amazon Prime customers to stream pilots for free and publicly comment on them gives Amazon an extra layer of certainty in deciding what goes into full series production. It's a big reason why Amazon is being watched closely in the streaming space and by traditional broadcast and cable networks. But despite its use of metrics, Sorensen says Amazon does rely on gut feelings in certain situations and is showing it's not afraid to take risks. After greenlighting its first round of series, all created by established producers, the studio said yes to its first online submission from an amateur in March. It greenlit David Anaxagoras' coming-of-age, live-action pilot *Gortimer Gibbon's Life on Normal Street*.

Taking chances

Anaxagoras, a graduate of UCLA's MFA screenwriting program, was a full-time preschool teacher when he submitted *Gortimer* to Amazon, and he had only written feature films previously. "He had never written a kids pilot and didn't consider himself a TV writer," says Sorensen. "But David is a wonderful writer with a unique voice that I had never seen in the kids space."

When Sorensen reviewed the submission, there was some concern it wouldn't be suitable for a younger kids audience. "It was a bit darker, so we worked with him to get it to a place that didn't compromise his vision, but also sat a bit more squarely in the six to 11 space, though not completely," she says. "I don't really think of *Gortimer* as a traditional kids show."

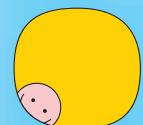
Gortimer Gibbon's Life on Normal Street is a 13 x 24-minute single-cam live-action series that follows the adventures of Gortimer (Sloane Morgan Siegel) and his two best friends, Ranger (Drew Justice) and Mel (Ashley Boettcher), in an ordinary suburban neighborhood that has a hint of something magical bubbling just beneath the surface.

"When we greenlit it, [Amazon Studios director] Roy Price was really great at reminding me that we could be experimental. So we took a chance," says Sorensen. With that mindset, Amazon brought another first-timer to the kids space, Luke Metheny (*Maron*, *God of Love*), on to the project to direct. "We looked for talent that hadn't worked on kids shows to bring a fresh perspective. Bringing Luke on wasn't necessarily the safest decision, but I wanted to be clear we were doing things in a different way," she notes.

According to Metheny, his directing techniques didn't require any major adjustments. "It's my first kids production ever, but I didn't approach it that differently from a non-kids project. I tried to stay true to the material and not condescend to kids," he says, likening the spirit of the show to *The Wonder Years* and *The Goonies*. He also supported the producers' decision to use a single camera to distinguish the series from hit Nickelodeon and Disney sitcoms, which shoot in a multi-cam style.

"We looked for talent that hadn't worked on kids shows to bring a fresh perspective."

– Tara Sorensen, Amazon Studios



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Sorensen says the one thing that surprised her from kids' comments about the pilot was that they found *Gortimer* so funny. "I wouldn't describe the pilot as funny," she contends. "There are some funny moments between the kids, but we were going more for a dramedy. I was glad, though, to see that kids responded so strongly to our three leads."

In fact, she says feedback has also been positive on Amazon's three newly launched kids shows. "Viewers have reacted well to *Armedroids* having a strong girl character, and to the curriculum threads in *Tumbleleaf* and *Creative Galaxy* that encourage kids to do activities outside of screen entertainment."

Lessons learned

And now that Amazon is into its next wave of pilots, Sorensen says the journey continues to be a learning experience. For example, Amazon's first crop of kids pilots all appeared as animatics, rather than as fully animated or live-action pieces, which caused some confusion with



Though slightly dark in tone, kids are responding well to the pilot's humor and three lead actors

reviewers. "For our second wave, we learned that we needed to more fully produce them so that our customers could better understand what the final product would look like," says Sorensen. "That has definitely elongated our production timeline. Our first pilots were produced within a two-to-three-month period and now it's a six- to seven-month period."

As Amazon's kids division looks to greenlight its next series, there is plenty of talk about how it will integrate commerce into its original content strategy, especially in light of its new deal with HIT Entertainment that is bringing an array of consumer products exclusively to Amazon.com via a *Fireman Sam* hub on the site. But Sorensen says her division will never option a property because it has a great play pattern. "Our prime objective is to create great entertainment that our customers will love for Prime Instant Video. If a character or story really resonates with a child, then eventually you will see product, but that order has to be done in the correct way." **K**

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Kids 8 to 14 are expected to gravitate to ABC's new sci-fi adventure series *Prisoner Zero*

Evolution down under

After recently revitalizing its linear sked, ABC Children's looks to sharpen its cross-platform digital content strategy

While watching television remains Australia's number-one pastime, according to a 2014 Deloitte media consumption survey, using the internet as a preferred source of entertainment ran a very close second for the first time, suggesting a digital tipping point is imminent in the country.

As the shift toward on-demand and cross-platform viewing in today's changing digital world continues to impinge upon kidcasters' linear schedules, staying agile in a market more competitive than ever remains one of the biggest challenges for traditional broadcasters.

For ABC Australia, adapting is particularly significant in 2014, given that Netflix Australia is rumored to be launching in 2015, and that budget cuts are expected to hit the pubcaster at the end of this year.

While it's still unknown how any impending cuts would affect ABC Children's ABC4Kids and ABC3 channels, ABC MD Mark Scott reported in August that the network is headed for a major restructure after the federal government's next round of cuts.

The good news, according to Scott, is children's programming remains a priority for ABC to drive audience engagement, and the broadcaster has already been working hard to evolve its kids services now that Australia's digital switchover is complete.

New focus

In February, ABC moved all children's programming from main terrestrial channel ABC1 to its dedicated digital channels ABC4Kids and ABC3, with ABC4Kids taking preschool programming and ABC3 playing home to content for school-age kids.

Then in July, it shifted its kids educational lineup from ABC1 to a new two-hour block, ABC TV Education, on ABC3. This migration of content has freed up ABC1 to schedule more adult-skewing content.

"We've extended the broadcast hours across both [ABC4Kids and ABC3] and aligned the content to match available audiences, focusing on priority timeslots and messaging to drive growth," says Deirdre Brennan, ABC TV head of children's television.

Despite the flurry of changes, ratings have so far been positive across linear and non-linear platforms. Brennan says programs now screened from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. on ABC4Kids, like *Shaun the Sheep* and *Guess How Much I Love You*, provide more targeted entertainment for the available audience. "Weekday programming at 6:30 p.m. has seen a 27% increase in 2014 for that timeslot average for an audience of zero to 12 years," she adds.



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THONG FAMILY: (iconic)
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way hamlet of Whale Bay.



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New ABC3 programming block 3House, which launched in July specifically for the five-to-eight set, airs weekdays from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. And its mainstay series including *Arthur*, *Jamie's Got Tentacles* and *Masha and the Bear* are also resonating with viewers. "Parents are responding well to the new zone as a safe and fun place for 'inbetweens' as they move from preschool into after-school entertainment," says Brennan.

As for VOD results, Brennan notes that in July 2014 there were 8.5 million plays of ABC4Kids programs and 4.5 million plays of ABC3 programs via ABC iview, Australia's leading VOD service, where kids shows account for more than 50% of total plays.

Digital investment

With more kids in Australia making mobile their platform of choice for interactive experiences, ABC has pinpointed a major digital project as one of its key opportunities for the next year. "By 2015, we will create a highly engaging, integrated and scalable ecosystem serving digital content across a range of mobile touch points, including mobile web versions of existing ABC4Kids and ABC3 online gateways, branded children's flagship apps and more integration with ABC iview," says Brennan.

"It is vital that we create the infrastructure that can support a platform-agnostic approach and manage all of our content accordingly. In future, this will include programming or gaming that lives away from the linear channel."

Beyond digital, the broadcaster's additional opportunities for the year ahead include: strengthening global and local broadcast and production partnerships; improving long-term content planning and scheduling; innovating production formats and models, and building parental trust through the migration of five- to seven-year-olds to ABC3.

Acquisition goals

Looking forward, Brennan says the pubcaster will consider all formats and types of programming suitable for its target kid audiences, but its preschool opportunities are currently limited. She will not be acquiring new preschool series for ABC's schedule until early 2016. "Our acquisition priorities for 2015/2016 relate to older children's and family content, proven program brands and innovative scripted formats such as telemovies, mini-series and events," she says.

Factual formats that engage local audiences are also on Brennan's radar. "As the children's industry moves increasingly towards animated comedy, we need to ensure that distinct, live-action storytelling remains part of our content mix," contends Brennan. "We are also keen to explore innovative production models and new formats (short-form, miniseries, features) that push beyond the prescriptive nature of current kids output."

New original animated titles on the 2015 slates for ABC4Kids and ABC3 include *Bubble Bath Bay*, *Guess How Much I Love You* season two and *The Kazoops*, while older kids can expect new shows such as *Little Lunch*, *Winston Steinburger & Dudley Dingdong* and *Prisoner Zero*.

Despite an uncertain future, Brennan says the network remains the market leader in children's content, but is very focused on improving and evolving its services to maintain its competitive position. "Our priority must be to deliver more Australian conversation and stories on all screens, in order to differentiate ABCTV in an increasingly cluttered market," she says. "It is a challenging time as we anticipate further funding cuts from the federal government. However, this provides a rare opportunity for transformational change, as we examine what we do and how we can do it better."

—Jeremy Dickson

"We need to ensure that distinct, live-action storytelling remains part of our content mix."

— Deirdre Brennan, ABC Children's



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Just Launched



In July, Disney XD's *The 7D* became the network's second-best original animated series premiere across key kids demos

A Jollywood time

At 77 years old, and still beloved by kids and families around the world, Disney's Seven Dwarfs entered a new phase in their long lives with the July 7 US debut of Disney XD original animated series *The 7D*. This contemporary, comedic take on the classic Brothers Grimm characters attracted 546,000 viewers and became the network's second-best original animated series premiere among kids two to 11 and six to 11. Rolling out globally this fall, Disney expects great things from its famous whistling workers.

Classic storytelling Executive produced by Tom Ruegger (*Animaniacs*), the series takes place long before Snow White's arrival and sees Happy, Bashful, Sleepy, Sneezy, Dopey, Grumpy and Doc working for Queen Delightful in the land of Jollywood. Life gets tricky, though, after the 7D discover a plot by villains Grim and Hildy Gloom to take over Jollywood by stealing magical jewels from the Dwarfs' mine. Paul DeBenedittis, SVP of programming strategy for Disney Channels Worldwide, says the initial idea for the series cropped up when Nancy Kanter, SVP of original programming and GM of Disney Junior Worldwide, and her team were looking to develop Disney heritage characters.

"Noah Jones (*Fish Hooks*) came up with some design concepts that we loved, and together with Tom, he helped flesh out the world and create the new characters and stories," says DeBenedittis. "The show has what Disney does best—classic storytelling, beloved characters with depth, and elements of whimsy and fun. It has an easy entry point for kids who may not have a lot of connection to the heritage, and it taps into parents' emotional connection with the heritage characters."

Along with its US debut, the series premiered on Disney XD in Canada and launched across platforms via Disney's popular WATCH apps.

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A transmedia story In advance of the series premiere, Disney Publishing Worldwide released *The 7D Mine Train*, a game app that shot to the top of the kids app charts for iPad devices in more than 40 countries. To date, it's been downloaded more than 1.3 million times.

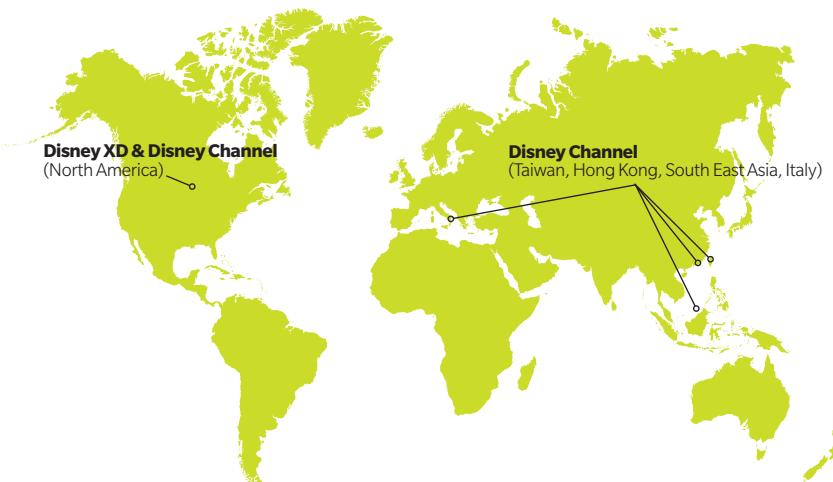
DeBenedittis says Disney also had some fun playing with the number seven by launching the first seven episodes of *The 7D* all at once across its WATCH platform. "It allowed us to connect with a young, on-demand audience exactly where they are. The episodes did really well on WATCH and then the linear premiere connected with a broader audience," he says.

The biggest creative challenge, according to DeBenedittis, was ensuring Disney could make a really great and funny new show. "We shot it like a sitcom, to some degree, and all of the components have come together nicely."

The series just made its Disney Channel US debut on September 15 and is expected to reach Disney Junior channels later this year. A 7D book and magazine are in the works, but as for a potential theatrical release in the future, DeBenedittis says it is too early to tell.

—Jeremy Dickson

On-air



NowTrending—Media

What's bubbling up in kid content culture



Hulu bets on STEM, grows kids library

While Hulu has a long way to go if it wants to catch main competitor Netflix in revenue, popularity and volume of kids content, the American SVOD service continues to prove it's serious about giving kids the programs they want. It's recently inked a raft of content deals with the likes of NCircle (*Mike the Knight*, *Dino Dan*, *The Wiggles*), VIZ Media (*Sailor Moon* reboot), Zodiak Kids (*Horrid Henry*, *Waybuloo*), BabyFirst (*Peekaboo*, *Harry the Bunny*) and Imira (*Lolo & Virginia*). And to stay on trend, it's offering more educational kids content with the launch of a new two-hour, STEM-themed programming block created by Steve Rotfeld Productions featuring new science- and tech-based programs such as *Xploration Station* and *Xploration Earth 2050*. After reaching the US\$1-billion mark in revenue last year, 2014 is shaping up to be another growth year for Hulu.

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Sparkling kids' curiosity

PBS KIDS delves into more live action and makes the most of digital innovation

The challenge Boasting a raft of newly secured streaming deals with the likes of Netflix, Chromecast and Apple TV, and successful app launches including *PBS KIDS Video* and *Super Vision*, US children's educational media brand PBS KIDS continues to be a leader in cross-platform innovation. But while PBS KIDS VP of children's programming Linda Simensky acknowledges that kids are increasingly watching content on mobile devices, she stresses the ongoing importance of linear programming.

"Kids are still watching TV. Everybody forgets that because of the huge shift that's happening, but the shift is being driven by relatively well-off kids who have access to devices," Simensky says.

Reaching 28.9 million kids two to 11 years old across all PBS stations from June 2013 to June 2014 (NTI) with a multi-platform focus on fresh original content (*Emmy winner Peg + Cat*, *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*) and popular long-running series (*Sesame Street*, *Curious George*, *Dinosaur Train*), PBS KIDS' overall numbers remain strong.

According to Nielsen, four of the top-15 shows for kids ages two to five in June 2014 were PBS KIDS programs. *Curious George* took the number-one spot, *Dinosaur Train* placed ninth, followed closely by *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* at 11 and *Wild Kratts* at 13.

For pbskids.org, streaming on the website accounted for 33% of all time spent watching kids videos online in June 2014, according to internet analyst comScore. And the *PBS KIDS Video* app generated more than 243 million streams in the same month (Google Analytics).

Despite these phenomenal results, Simensky says there needs to be more investment in educational content. "The number of people who are interested in making educational kids programming is pretty constant, but the competition is growing, so we need more people to get involved," she says.

The programming This year marks another big and transformational one for beloved series *Sesame Street*. The

45th season premiered in September, and for the first time, a half-hour weekday afternoon version of the program is airing to complement the morning show. In another first, full episodes from the new season, rather than just clips, are now available for free across PBS platforms. The recent launch of *Cookie Monster's Challenge* also marks the first time PBS has collaborated with Sesame Workshop to create an app.

For new programming, Simensky says the broadcaster's focus this fall will be on the November 26 premiere of live-action math series *The Odd Squad*, produced by The Fred Rogers Company and Canada's Sinking Ship Entertainment.

"It is a different show for us. I don't do a lot of live-action, so I've learned a lot," she says. "It's designed to help kids learn math, problem-solve and collaborate. It's really funny, too. The tone is a little bit *Men In Black*, *Airplane* and *Get Smart*."

After *Peg + Cat*, *The Odd Squad* is the second series recently funded by the five-year Ready To Learn Initiative. PBS just entered the final year of the TV and digital media development program.

Simensky says PBS is putting a lot of effort into the promotion of *The Odd Squad* by working with bloggers and local stations to hold Odd Squad events.

Switching it up Always looking to tweak its schedule, PBS KIDS tried double-stripping episodes (running two different eps from the same show in a row) for the first time this summer, and the strategy has worked.

"Networks have been doing it for years. We always wanted to try it, so we finally did, and the numbers have been up for us. The stations have encouraged us to keep this in mind as we move ahead with the fall skeds," says Simensky.

As for shows in development, Simensky says PBS has a number of concepts in the hopper, but details are scant. "One of the areas I find interesting is getting kids outside. This will be an area we will cover in one of our next shows." —Jeremy Dickson

In PBS KIDS' new series *The Odd Squad*, agents Otto and Olive solve cases ranging from disappearing zeroes to runaway dinosaurs

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A new DreamWorks Dragons series will soon start airing on Netflix exclusively, and the studio is banking on the guaranteed series order to buoy Dragon merch at retail

consumer products



A prime mover?

Netflix now has more subscribers in the US than HBO, but whether or not the SVOD leader has the power to drive consumer products sales like traditional kidnets do is still the big question—especially in the absence of viewership data

BY AARON HUTCHINS

Online content has become an all-you-can-eat buffet for kids programming and it appears that Netflix, based on recent deals, wants to be the biggest restaurant in town. The SVOD giant has invested heavily in exclusive kids content, including a long-form *Ever After High* series from Mattel and a *Magic School Bus* reboot from Scholastic. Then there's DreamWorks Animation, which has made the biggest deal of all so far—locking down a commitment for 300 hours of original programming.

In effect, Netflix Kids has become a channel in itself stateside, one that's competing with the likes of Cartoon Network, Disney Channel and Nickelodeon for viewer attention. And at its current rate of growth, theoretically the SVOD service could very soon have the reach required to drive consumer products programs for its original programming. So are licensors looking to launch long-term TV-driven franchises at retail considering a Netflix-first deal as a viable option right now?

Let's just say studio biggie DreamWorks Animation is pretty confident about Netflix's consumer products future. "This year, 95% of my revenue is movie-based," says Michael Connolly, head of global consumer products. "Five years from now, probably around 20% will be movie-based. The other 80% will all be [derived from] Netflix-driven content."

Connolly's 80% prediction might sound optimistic to some, but he contends that roughly half of all US children will be watching content on Netflix within the next few years. He also sees it as a chance to launch new franchises that don't debut via the silver screen (DreamWorks' traditional model). So along with its upcoming film-based series *King Julien (Madagascar)* and *Puss in Boots (Shrek)*, DreamWorks has lined up merch-friendly *DinoTrux*, a new series starring hybrid dinosaur-construction vehicle characters that will debut on Netflix in spring 2015.

Numbers don't lie...

The former DVD-by-mail service has reported a meteoric rise in subscribers as SVOD continues to gain in popularity. With 29.17 million US subscribers as of Q1 this year, Netflix has surpassed HBO's 28.7 million, according to Virginia-based media research firm SNL Kagan. Netflix still has a way to go to best HBO's 114 million subscriptions worldwide, though it is gaining ground. Europeans will make up one-fifth of all Netflix subscribers by the end of 2015, according to a recent analysis from IHS, a Colorado-based business information provider. Netflix's expansion into new markets like Germany, Belgium, France, Austria, Luxembourg and Switzerland is the reason IHS predicts Netflix will have an additional eight million subscribers in Europe by 2018.

"I think we're definitely getting close to the point where Netflix is able to drive product sales based on exclusive content and original series for kids programming," says Mike Olsen, a senior research analyst with Piper Jaffray. "Most estimates suggest Netflix will have—just in the US—45 million subscribers by the end of 2015."

While 45 million subscribers is an impressive number, it still lags behind the reach of other kid-centric networks. According to Nielsen numbers, Sprout is available in 55 million homes in the US, while Hub Network reaches 72 million. Then there's the big three—Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network and Disney Channel—which are each broadcast in roughly 99 million US homes, covering about 86% of the market. The big difference is that consumers actively subscribe to Netflix—it is not just part of a larger cable package like the traditional kidnets.

"There may be 99 million subscribers to packages that include Nickelodeon, but many of those subscribers may never even turn Nick on," Olsen says. With the SVOD leader, however, "you're getting a more specifically targeted audience that is looking for the content Netflix is providing." Sure, many subscribers are those without kids who simply want to watch *Orange is the New Black*, but Olsen says the percentage of Netflix subscribers who want kids content is higher than that of a cable package subscriber who watches a major kids channel. The exact Netflix numbers, however, are pretty hard for outsiders to decipher.

...but numbers can lie by omission

Total subscribers is one thing, but determining how many children watch a particular show is another thing entirely.

TV's Nielsen ratings may be often criticized as unreliable by cable networks, but they are still a quotable measure of a program's success. Netflix, on the other hand, keeps all viewer data close to its chest.

"They don't share anything," says Leslye Schaefer, SVP of marketing & consumer products for Scholastic Media, whose classic *Goosebumps* series currently airs on Netflix and Hub Network. The additional exposure for the show is great, she adds, but quantifying how much of a product sales bump it received from being on Netflix is the great unknown. Scholastic isn't privy to information like how many people are downloading episodes, how long they're watching for, what times they are tuning in, what episodes are most popular, or how its shows are faring compared to its competitors. Instead, Schaefer's retail sales team is left quoting Netflix's impressive total subscriber numbers to prospective partners—and little else.

"[Netflix] needs to help us understand how our shows are performing so that we can take that information and use it for our sales purposes."

—Leslye Schaefer, Scholastic Media

"You're selling the sizzle and not the steak," says Andrew Kerr, co-head of Toronto, Canada-based Corus Entertainment's Nelvana Enterprises. "When the bets and the risk are so crucial in terms of [product] tooling and inventory, and there's so little room for error, you're just not going to see a lot of mass-market retailers willing to place that kind of bet without seeing some kind of real metric."

But Kerr, like many others in the industry, welcomes any incremental viewership his company's properties gain through Netflix. The platform gives back-catalogs a second life, without confining them to the same restrictions as linear TV channels, which can only showcase 24 hours of content a day.

"For a property to truly be a brand that transcends the screen and goes into other markets...it needs to be accessible in many outlets," says Elie Dekel, president of Saban Brands. "Ubiquity is good." *Power Rangers Super Megaforce*, for example, airs on Nickelodeon, while older seasons of *Power Rangers* are available to stream on Hulu and Amazon. Netflix viewers, meanwhile, have access to the series' full 21 seasons, which puts 800 *Power Rangers* episodes at their fingertips.

Since making the deal with Netflix in 2011, Dekel says he's noticed it has helped drive interest in the franchise, as seen largely through anecdotal evidence. At the most recent Power Morphicon (think Comic-Con for Power Rangers fans), attendees often talked about participating in marathon-viewing sessions—watching as many episodes back-to-back as they pleased—thanks to Netflix.

Schaefer figures the original *Magic School Bus* episodes also must be getting traction—after all, Netflix bought the exclusive rights to the upcoming reboot *Magic School Bus*

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360—but determining its potential to drive a licensing program is not possible. “[Netflix] needs to help us understand how our shows are performing so that we can take that information and use it for our sales purposes,” she adds.

The absence of ratings data could affect the size of the guarantees that licensees are willing to offer, according to Needham & Co. analyst Sean McGowan. But he says the lack of metrics shouldn’t be a huge deterrent overall. “[Licensees] don’t care if a lot of people are watching,” he says. “They care if a lot of people are buying.”

Netflix could decide to keep its data buttoned up forever. But that might not be the only worry. What happens as Netflix becomes more selective in its kids programming choices? It’s plausible that Netflix could become a major gatekeeper, functioning as the big three do now. “Netflix could become an obstacle to traditional kids consumer products companies getting access to those eyeballs, if they have to go through a network that now might have an interest in doing its own programming,” McGowan says.

Could Netflix’s investment in kids originals eventually rival that of Nick, CN and Disney? Will it ever share its data? Who knows? Netflix declined multiple requests for comment on this story.

The long haul

Netflix has demonstrated its commitment to acquiring original and exclusive kids content, and for those franchises that hit the mark in theaters with kids, the platform will also extend their product lifespan well past the movie debut and DVD release.

“There’s the continuity piece that doesn’t have the perils of those big movie launches and all of the timing and nail biting that goes along with those features,” says Carol Spieckerman, president of the Bentonville, Arkansas-based retail consultancy newmarketbuilders. “They get the big surge from the movie and they get to continue the franchise [with] Netflix as a flanker strategy to ride that brand to the beach.”

It’s a strategy DreamWorks is counting on for multiple franchises, including Netflix exclusives *DreamWorks Dragons*, based on the *How to Train Your Dragon* movies, and the brand-new B.O.O. film franchise.

“When you go to a retailer and say not only is *B.O.O. (Bureau of Otherworldly Operations)* coming out as a movie, but we’re going to have 78 episodes to follow it...it’s getting us placement,” Connolly says. With that guaranteed TV commitment, licensees don’t have the worries associated with a traditional broadcast placement. There’s no danger of getting yanked from the airwaves if ratings fail to take off immediately, which pretty much stops licensing programs in their tracks. In fact, in this scenario, a property has the breathing room not often afforded by the ratings-driven demands of network television. “We’re not going to cancel [a series] after season one or season two,” he notes. “We’re saying three years or bust, and retailers like to hear that because it lowers their liability on the buy.”

The challengers

While Netflix is the undisputed leader in SVOD today, there is no shortage of competitors looking to chip away at its kids audience. There are an array of children-focused platforms (like HopsterTV and Kidoodle) and territorial services (such as Shomi, a Canadian video streaming service from communications giants Rogers and Shaw) all looking for a piece of the SVOD pie. Then there’s heavyweight Amazon, which signed a deal in 2013 with Nickelodeon-owner Viacom to bring its vault of children’s content that was formerly available on Netflix to Amazon Prime. Viacom’s deal with the e-tail giant also offered certain consumer products perks, as seen last Christmas when Amazon launched three separately branded online shops for Nick’s *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *Dora the Explorer* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.

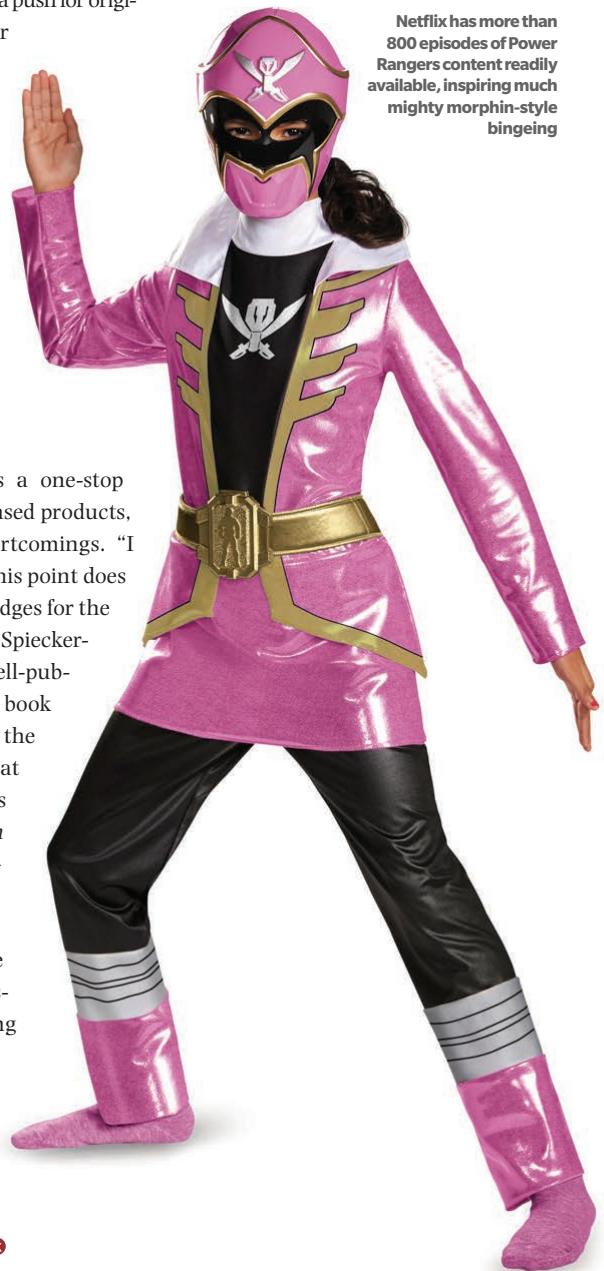
Not only has Amazon made a push for original kids content, earlier this year

Mattel-owned HIT Entertainment signed a deal to make Amazon the exclusive US home for both *Fireman Sam* episodes and merch. Hypothetically, a child could be in a grocery store shopping cart watching the show and mom could click a few buttons on her phone to get the toy delivered straight to her door—without ever leaving the Amazon site.

But while Amazon offers a one-stop shop for all episodes and licensed products, the e-tailer has its own shortcomings. “I don’t know that Amazon at this point does a very good job at building bridges for the assets that it’s managing,” Spieckerman says. She points to the well-publicized pricing debate with book publisher Hachette, as well as the recent dispute with Disney that put a halt on DVD pre-orders for *Maleficent* and *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*—a problem which neither side has addressed publicly.

As Amazon grows in the kids space, it could quite easily shy away from promoting brands based on TV series available just on Netflix. “At any given time, Amazon can decide who it wants to punish,” Spieckerman says. “Hell hath no fury like Amazon scorned.” **K**

Netflix has more than 800 episodes of *Power Rangers* content readily available, inspiring much mighty morphin-style bingeing





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3D-printed My Little Pony figures are available on SuperFanArt, a website partnership between Hasbro and Shapeways

User-generated sales

From spinning fiction to 3D printing, Hasbro lets fans dabble in product creation

It may sound a little young, but Brandon Lee Johnson was six years old when he started 3D modeling at home. A gamer at heart, the boy from Oshawa, Canada used freeware programs to develop his skills in computer programming, never thinking he could one day bring his creations to life. But four years ago, Johnson (now 17) discovered the 3D printing marketplace Shapeways, where he started to design printable figures based on one of his favorite TV shows—*My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*. And he wasn't the only one.

Others on the site were making their own My Little Pony figures, too, well before licensor Hasbro had cottoned onto 3D printing. But the toyco did eventually take notice. "And instead of saying, 'You can't do this. Stop. Get me a cease-and-desist,' [Hasbro] said, 'Let's figure out a way to do this so that everybody gets a piece of the action,'" says Duann Scott, a designer evangelist (yes, that's his real title) with Shapeways.

Hasbro teamed up with Scott's company this summer to launch SuperFanArt, a new site where selected artists can market and sell their 3D creations. Marquee franchise My Little Pony led the way, and Johnson was among the first five designers picked to create printable figures. His sandstone figure of Pinkie Pie, for example, can be purchased for US\$45. SuperFanArt is now looking for potential artists to create 3D-printable designs for Transformers, G.I. Joe, Monopoly, Dragonvale, Scrabble and Dungeons & Dragons.

The one-off revolution

User-generated content was all the rage back in 2006, when the early days of YouTube and user-friendly editing software

helped give exposure to amateur singers and video directors. For fans of kids brands, however, there was a wall preventing the manufacturing of user-generated toy designs. "Every SKU, by its very nature, would be a one-off, making it impossible to achieve any kind of economy of scale and enter the mass market," *Kidscreen* wrote of user-generated licensed products in 2007. "And it might never work for large, long-established properties that simply have too much to lose in letting any possible inappropriate fan-designed product into the market."

Fast forward to 2014, and that wall is starting to crumble. "The power of 3D printing is that there is no minimum order or minimum run," Scott says. "Supply exactly meets demand." Companies can test out new designs that may not sell enough to warrant securing shelf space at physical retailers. "They could just print 500 or 507 or 23," Scott adds. "That untapped market can be tapped and there's no cost."

And while 3D printing is the latest toy-changing tech, it is not the only one to expand UGC potential. Look at online reading, which has led to a surge of fan fiction. The challenge for many brand owners with such content, however, is letting fans explore new dimensions and storylines of their properties without having the product go entirely off-brand.

Earlier this year, Hasbro also signed a deal to let fans create and sell G.I. Joe fan fiction on Amazon's Kindle Worlds. To keep things in check, Hasbro and Kindle Worlds published a set of content guidelines for users to follow. The 16 rules range from forbidding anything

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offensive (no pornography, illegal drug use or offensive language) to any mixed branding, including putting third-party IPs or real-life characters in the narrative. "We were in a good position to allow people to play in our sandbox without letting them kick sand in anybody's face," says Michael Kelly, Hasbro's director of publishing. The result has been some compelling storytelling from people who are most passionate about the brand, Kelly adds. "One of my favorite things is when you see a new character that someone has come up with in their minds and it works really well."

Ready or not, here they come

Even if licensors are not ready to enter into the largely uncharted world of user-generated licensing, it does not necessarily mean their reluctance will curb the demand—or supply—from fans. The lines of copyright for

3D printing, for example, are somewhat blurred. Last year, Tintin IP owner Moulinsart served the 3D design community Thingiverse with a lawsuit, demanding it remove a printable design based on Tintin's rocket ship. The site took the design down, but pretty soon another user uploaded a modified version of the rocket. Like many musicians who sued websites that shared their music in MP3 format, it did nothing to stop people from downloading music for free. It just created ill will between the music industry and fans. And just as CD burners became ubiquitous, 3D printers are poised to be the next industry disruptor.

Sales for consumer-ready 3D printers will surpass a million units by 2018, according to a recent report from UK-based Juniper Research—a dramatic increase from the estimated 44,000 sold this year. The research firm is also forecasting that 3D printer sales for hardware and materials will exceed US\$1 billion by 2018, while this year's sales will hit around US\$75 million. And the future of printing won't be solely for teens or adults.

Printeer, a Kickstarter-funded 3D printer, is built for kids and designed to use the non-toxic plastic material PLA. Its Kickstarter campaign more than doubled its target, generating US\$117,000 in donations, but that doesn't mean brick-and-mortar stores have to fear the 3D printer just yet. These entry-level household printers are unlikely to offer the same quality, variety or materials that factory-grade printers do. But they are trying to catch up. "The material palette is evolving very quickly," Scott says. "We started out six years ago with one material, an ABS plastic. Now we have 48 options." That includes stainless steel, ceramics, sterling silver, brass, bronze, gold and silver.

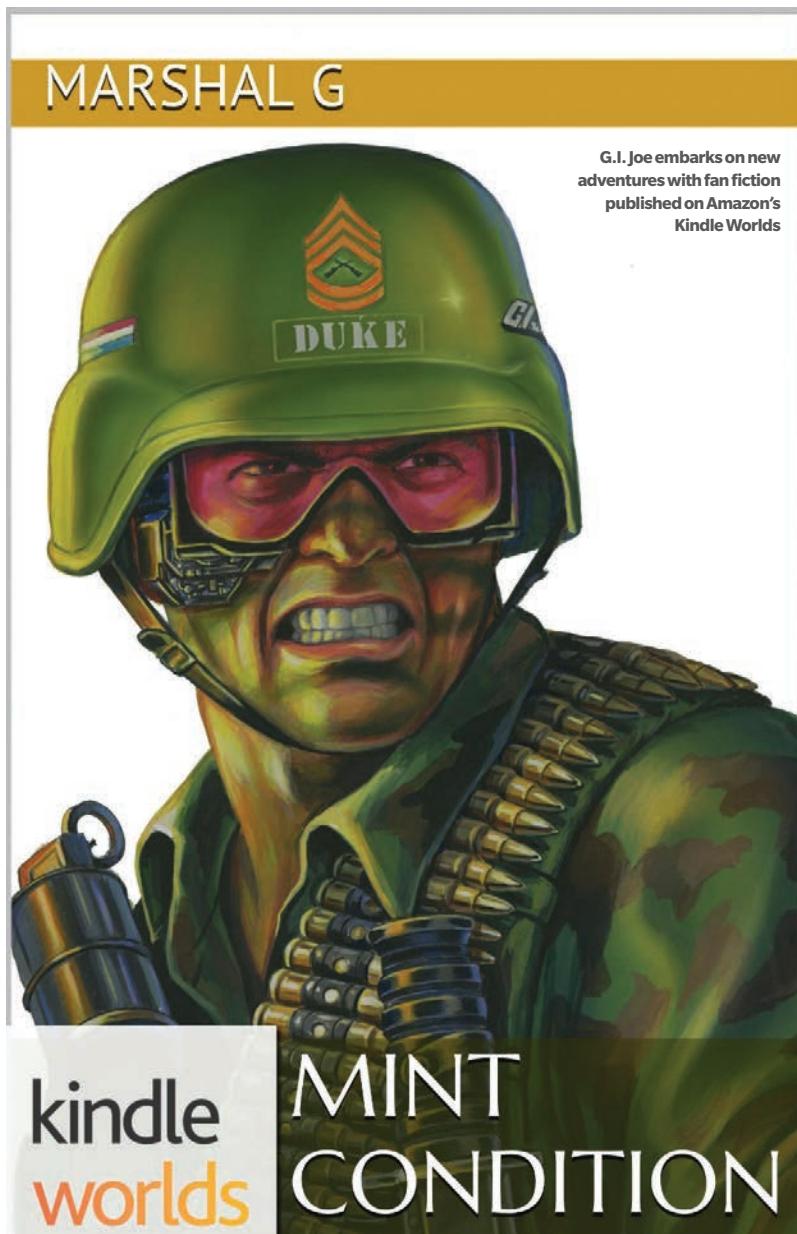
Make it easy

Even if the selection of materials expands exponentially, there is still the problem of regular fans designing toys in the first place. Johnson says creating a 3D-printable model based on My Little Pony might take him eight hours—a fairly big time commitment for the average kid. To boot, most fans aren't 3D-modeling experts and can't create viable products. As a result, their toys are still confined to the imagination of those trained to create them.

Toye has jumped in with a 3D-printing toy creator app, where users can customize poses or add accessories to their own characters, or those from the app games *Pou!* or *Cut the Rope*. The iOS and Android app is free to download, but the cost to print and ship the product (depending on the size) is around US\$50. It's a steep price for customers, but it is their own one-of-a-kind creation.

As similar toy printing apps expand with licensing deals and better technology, the next question for fans might be, "Do you want G.I. Joe with the car, the rocket launcher, the crossbow or the gun? And you'll say 'I want the crossbow,'" Scott says. "You won't know that it's printed. You'll just know it's what you wanted."

—By Aaron Hutchins



MARSHAL G

G.I. Joe embarks on new adventures with fan fiction published on Amazon's Kindle Worlds

kindle worlds

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Nothing to snort at

As licensor
eOne
celebrates
Peppa
Pig's 10th
anniversary,
the hit UK
preschool
property is
just hitting its
stride abroad

Depending on the breed, your average pig typically has a lifespan of about 10 years. But not Peppa. As eOne Licensing's premier property prepares to celebrate its 10th anniversary this year, Peppa Pig is showing few signs of slowing down.

"Although Peppa is 10 years old, she's not necessarily 10 years old in every single country," says Olivier Dumont, MD of eOne Family and eOne Licensing. "The area where we are developing licensing most right now is Asia, notably China, and Russia."

Peppa's eponymous TV series made its debut in Russia just last year on kidnet Karusel. With Megalicense International as its agent in the region, and the first stage of licensing categories filled, eOne is looking for further apparel DTR deals, secondary toy category licensees and houseware partners. Peppa and her family will also soon be travelling to China, with eOne planning to announce broadcast deals in the near future.

So while it may appear that Peppa is everywhere in the preschool space at the moment, new TV episodes, theme parks and live theater shows will keep her CP potential alive and well as she approaches her teenage years.

Outside of her native UK, Peppa toys are also big sellers. Peppa was the fifth-bestselling toy property in Australia for the first six months of 2014, according to figures from The NPD Group. And several European markets are just starting to fall for her. "Quite recently, it's taken Spain

and Italy by storm," says Frédérique Tutt, a global toy industry analyst with NPD.

In Spain, from January to June 2014, Peppa was the fourth-bestselling toy property, trailing only Playmobil, Monster High and Star Wars. Later this year, the live show *A Day with Peppa*, created by Creativos Ecuaventos, will launch in theater venues across that country.

But even that pales in comparison to her popularity in Italy, where Peppa made the cover of *Vanity Fair* this year. Peppa Pig was the bestselling toy property in the country over the first six months of 2014, according to NPD's numbers, and her pervasiveness continues to grow. A four-year deal with Milan's Leolandia theme park will see a Peppa Pig area installed in 2015, including a water play zone, a playground, and as an interactive tour of the porcine family's two-story home.

Peppa has been a boon to theme parks before. Since Peppa Pig World first opened inside Paultons Family Theme Park in Hampshire, England in 2011, visitors have doubled to one million per year. "It's key to experience brands in live format and not just on linear TV," contends Dumont.

And yet, after more than 200 episodes produced, with broadcast deals in more than 180 territories and 40 different languages, TV is where Peppa is most famous. To celebrate the property's 10th anniversary, the series' creator and producer Astley Baker Davies and eOne are readying a special 15-minute episode. "Peppa Pig and the Golden Boots" will air this December in the UK on Channel 5's Milkshake block and Nick Jr., the series' first broadcasters in 2004.

With new themes comes new consumer products potential. Perhaps Golden Boots will be the next footwear trend for the rainy UK season. After all, the number of pairs of Peppa Pig shoes sold in the UK outnumbers its population of kids under 12, according to eOne.

Despite having more than 300 licensees around the world, there's still room in Peppa's licensing pen—even in Britain. "What's growing the most in the UK is FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) and promotions," Dumont says. "All the other categories are very much secured in the territory." That includes a deal with Character Options, which recently re-signed as Peppa Pig's master toy licensee in the region until at least December 2017.

Fans can expect more Peppa themes moving forward. Because the show isn't limited to any set era or location, it is only constrained by Peppa's imagination. "If we say to the creators, 'It'd be great if there was an entire episode with pirates,' we could probably find a way to create that," Dumont says. "It's very easy to introduce strong themes into Peppa, which can then be marketed." That being said, don't expect to see Peppa with an eye patch and parrot on her shoulder anytime soon. Nor should licensees expect a big marketing push from eOne. The entertainment company plans to stick with its strategy of gradual growth for its most popular franchise. "It was a very conscious decision not to over-market the brand and shove it down people's throats," Dumont says. "It's always stronger when you discover something on your own." —Aaron Hutchins

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Shaun and Timmy will be the faces of British Council's kid-focused English learning centers around the globe

Speaking up

They may be silent stars, but Aardman's Shaun the Sheep and Timmy can still help kids learn English

Shaun isn't the most talkative sheep in the world. In fact, he doesn't speak at all. The adventures of Aardman Animations' well-known stop-motion character revolve largely around the sounds of the barnyard. But a new partnership between UK-based Aardman and educational org British Council will soon see Shaun and his preschool brother Timmy entice a herd of youngsters around the world to learn to speak English.

The new branded English learning centers will primarily feature Shaun's younger brother, Timmy, the star of preschool spinoff series *Timmy Time*. Learning Time with Shaun and Timmy, the program's current title, will have a soft launch in Chile this November, followed by a second language center opening in Singapore in 2015—the Year of the Sheep. As part of the multi-year partnership, British Council is also aiming to open a branded center in Mexico.

"The plan is we'll bring the fun, the entertainment, the excitement and hopefully the draw into learning English," says Sean Clarke, head of Aardman Rights and Brand Development. "[British Council] will bring the practical training and credibility."

The international organization for education and cultural relations currently operates approximately 80 teaching centers in 52 countries across Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South America. While many British Council centers teach adults, the new Shaun and Timmy outlets will focus on young learners, who often require more interactivity in their lesson plans.

Aardman is also building a licensing program for Learning Time with Shaun and Timmy and first plans to roll out digital educational apps for iOS and Android to support the centers. As the user base grows, the company will look to expand into other ancillary categories such as publishing, stationery, backpacks and any other products that could enhance the learning experience.

"The minute you walk into these centers, you feel the atmosphere of the farmyard, the kindergarten, and the

learning experience that Timmy has in the *Timmy Time* episodes," says Anna Searle, British Council director of English language. "You're walking into the world of those characters."

Teachings will also include watching *Shaun the Sheep* or *Timmy Time*, but only short segments. "You wouldn't want to play full scenes anyway, because it isn't about sitting and watching television," Searle says. "It's about using the experiences of Shaun and Timmy to exemplify and build on learning concepts."

There is also what some might consider the peculiar choice of appointing characters that don't speak as the faces of a campaign promoting language development. Both Aardman and British Council say Shaun's silence actually offers a distinct advantage for non-English speakers. "The fact that he doesn't speak is one of the reasons he's so popular all over the world," Clarke says. "The connection is the performance of the characters and how they work together. They haven't been dubbed."

Aardman is also not alone in trying to create branded English schools abroad. Last month, BBC Worldwide reached a deal with Singapore-based Popular Holdings to launch CBeebies-branded English Language Learning centers in mainland China and Hong Kong. The schools will target kids ages three to six and feature characters from *Sarah and Duck*, *Numtums* and *Nina and the Neurons*, with BBCW being paid a license fee for content.

As a British IP with well over a million Facebook fans, *Shaun the Sheep* is a trusted educational source, and not simply because of the chalkboard diagrams he draws on the show. *Shaun* is helping to teach kids how to code using the computer program Scratch through *Shaun's Game Academy* (shaunsgameacademy.co.uk). Will *Shaun* and *Timmy* now help to produce a new generation of English speakers? "In my travels, to China and elsewhere, so much money is spent on giving kids that extra leg up," Clarke says. "Hopefully we can be part of that and make it easier." —Aaron Hutchins

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Knock on Bajo

Polish wooden toymaker makes first licensing deal for The Gruffalo

Who In the southern Polish village of Kamionna, near Krakow, Wojciech Bajor has designed wooden toys for more than 20 years. An architect and teacher by trade, he established a local family business with his wife in 1993 and built a company focused on educational and environmentally conscious toys. Located just down the track from Wojciech's log home, Bajo has grown by securing distributors across Europe and Australia, all while still employing many of the local villagers in its factory at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains.

"We are close to the forest, nature and wood," says Anna Bajor, Wojciech's daughter and one of the company's designers. The location helped the company excel in its niche. Bajo makes an array of wooden push toys, animal figures and puzzles. It has designed various wooden vehicles, including toy helicopters, bicycles and cars. There are rattles for infants, decor items, and even swings—all made from beech, birch, sycamore or maple wood harvested at nearby sustainably kept forests. Bajo's current catalog has several hundred toys on display, though Bajor says the toyco has designed plenty more over the past two decades. "Nobody is counting," she laughs.

What Earlier this year, Bajo partnered with prodco and brand manager Magic Light Pictures to create a line of wooden toys based on *The Gruffalo*. In its first licensing deal, Bajo came up with the designs for five *Gruffalo* items, which include push toys (US\$49), a theater set (US\$58) and wooden figures (US\$58).



The Gruffalo becomes one with the forest with wooden toys from Bajo

While many of Bajo's animal toys—dogs, rabbits and crocodiles to name a few—use wooden wheels for their legs, the designers opted against that for *The Gruffalo*. "It would look like they were in a wheelchair," Bajor says. So to recreate the storybook look of the British IP's picture books and TV specials, Bajo made figures that can be animated with movable arms and legs. The *Gruffalo* wooden toys are distributed all over the world at specialty retailers, while Bajo has designs ready for more toys pending the success of its first instalment.

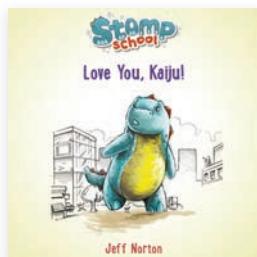
What's Next Bajo's *Gruffalo* toy line was a finalist for Best Licensed Toys or Games Range at the 2014 Licensing Awards held in London last month. Bajor says the company has talked licensing with several property owners since signing *The Gruffalo*, but it has yet to make any official deals.

For interested licensors, however, the toymaker specialize in educational products for preschoolers and kindergarteners, as well as wheeled vehicles.

In the meantime, Bajo designers are creating any new items that spring to mind, be it toys for infants or new takes on the wooden rocking horse—like the wooden rocking motorbike. "My father really likes to design cars," Bajor says. "And they sell really well."

And when the working day is done, they can step outside and draw more inspiration from the natural landscape. "This forest looks exactly like the *Gruffalo* forest," she says. "You can see owls, foxes, snakes and mice...I've never seen any *Gruffalo* though."

Contact Konrad Kosecki, sales marketing manager (48-14-613-7246 ext. 21, kbajo@bajo.com.pl) —Aaron Hutchins



BookBet

A full day of Stomp School

If Kaiju monsters are off destroying cities, who's looking after their kids? That's the premise of *Stomp School*, Jeff Norton's first picture book series. Produced in partnership with Made In Me, the series' first instalment, *Stomp School: Love You Kaiju!*, will first appear exclusively on the eBook publisher's digital platform Me Books in November for US\$4.99 before pursuing print. "[Me Books] is kind of like Netflix," Norton says. "We're hoping *Stomp School* is like *House of Cards*." The books serve as a child's introduction to preschool with a bit of a twist. In this classroom, Kaiju children—such as anacondas, gorillas and yeti creatures—learn how to construct miniature cities that they then destroy, just like their parents. Only main character Rikki is the holdout. He just wants to keep on building. —Aaron Hutchins

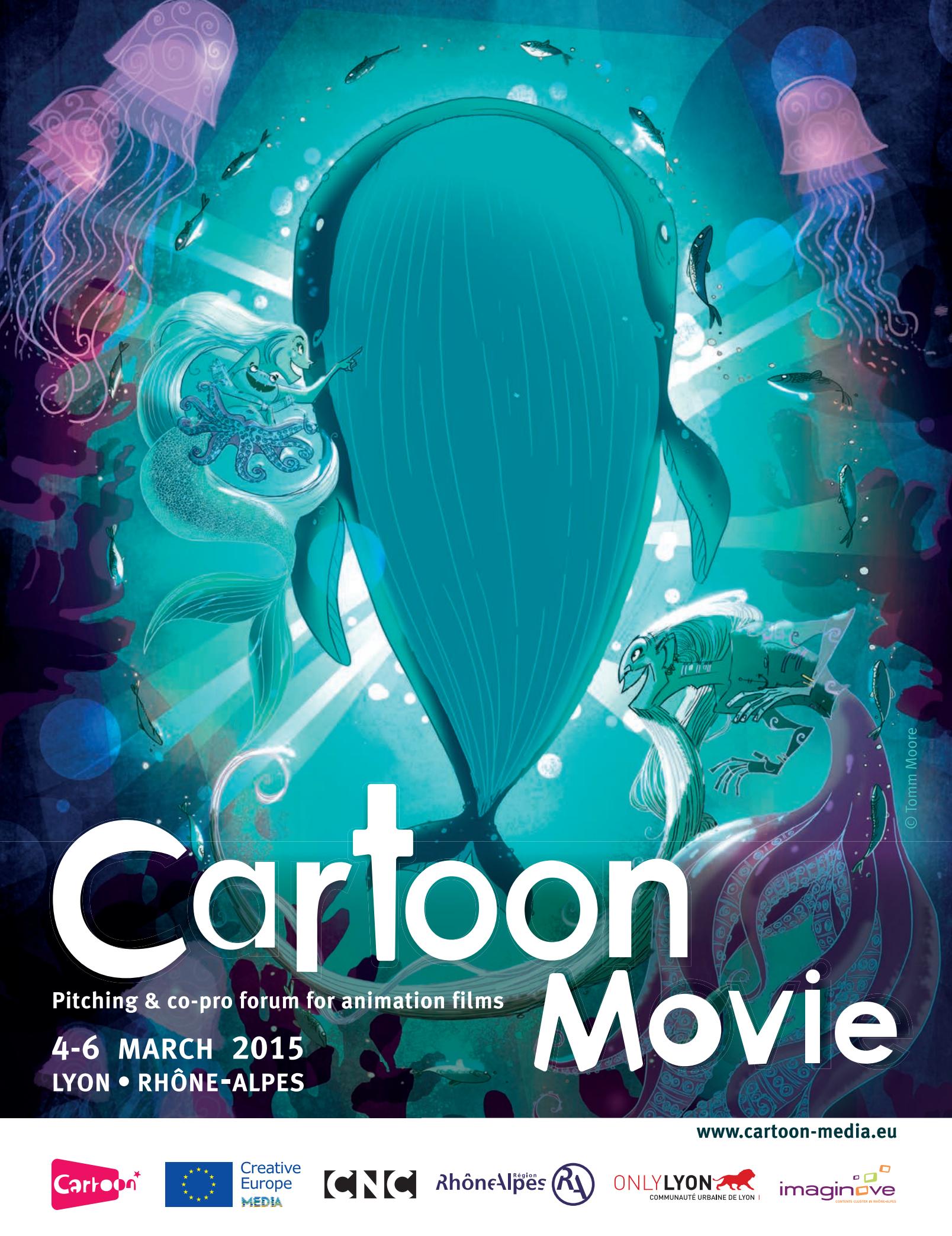
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trend we've seen emerge among teens and trickle down to tweens, so it's no surprise that they're gravitating towards platforms that support this behavior in a simple, seamless way.

Speaking of simple and seamless, these are key attributes to platform interaction for teens, especially boys, and have a lot to do with why teens are migrating to Instagram in packs. The interface involves just a few touches to post a picture, and is intuitive and easy to navigate overall. Twitter is also being praised for its simple and quick ability to post a message. Despite the ease of posting, there is quite a learning curve that comes with understanding how Twitter works. In fact, many teens report that while they may have tried Twitter at younger ages, they don't start to engage with it consistently until their later high school years. Once teens understand it, they embrace it, and are likely to follow everyone from celebrities and famous YouTubers to friends and sports teammates. Additionally, teens seem more likely to engage with brands and celebrities on Twitter than on any other platform. Their perception is that brands and celebs have the biggest presence on Twitter, making it the place for them to keep up with the latest happenings among their favorite brands, singers, actors/actresses and athletes.

Engagement doesn't stop with jumping from platform to platform. Some teen girls are likely to set up multiple accounts within one platform. The most common strategy is to have one account for "just family" and one account for "just my friends." Also mentioned was setting up accounts based on favorite interests or fandom. For example, some girls who were avid fans of a particular celebrity or singer reported having a separate account dedicated to just that celebrity, and commonly interacting with other fans who share a common fondness. While it may seem like a lot of work to manage many social media accounts, teens don't see it this way. They've grown up in a world of constant connectedness; it's all they've ever known. Social media provides them with another way to stay easily connected and manage their social lives. Simply put, it's just their way of life today. **k**

This concludes our report on social media. Next month, Kaleidoscope will explore the latest and greatest in kid and family trends popping this year.

For more information, contact Kaleidoscope@nick.com

(Source: Nickelodeon Consumer Insights Research, Qualitative research, August 2014)

A major focus of the Consumer Insights Department at Nickelodeon is to live and breathe kid culture. We continually track and identify trends, and explore what it means to be a kid and teen today. In an effort to keep you in touch with our audience and give a voice to our consumer, we've created the Nickelodeon Kaleidoscope. Every month, Kaleidoscope will capture key areas of interest across the kid and family cultural landscape, provide an understanding of attitudes and behaviors, and report on trends and buzz.

Growing up connected

Nickelodeon takes a closer look at teens' daily social media engagement

BY ERIN MILLER

In last month's Kaleidoscope, we took a look at the role social media plays in teens' lives. Not surprisingly, teens are heavily immersed in platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter, and engagement only increases as they get older. In part two of this Nickelodeon report, we take a closer look at the behavior that shapes 13- to 17-year-olds' daily social media engagement, and the importance it plays in their social lives offline.

As previously reported, teen boys and girls are starting to move away from Facebook and onto Instagram as their social media platform of choice. Instagram has become teens' go-to source for keeping up with friends' daily happenings, making plans, and communicating with one another. The appeal of Instagram has much to do with the simple posting of a picture to express what teens like, where they are, and what they're doing. Similar to Instagram, we see teens also adopting Snapchat to communicate daily with their friends. In fact, teens report that Snapchat has emerged as a favorite social network and is considered one of the coolest to use today. Though there are common perceptions that Snapchat is likely used for inappropriate messaging among peers, this couldn't be further from teen radar. They simply enjoy attaching a picture to express what they're doing and how they're feeling. And because a Snapchat picture and message only lasts 10 seconds, they often take this opportunity to send "silly and ugly" faces to one another—pictures they wouldn't dare post to their wider-reaching social networks. Communication through imagery is a larger



by  **insightkids**

Insight Kids answers a question posed by one of *Kidscreen's* inquisitive readers

Why are tween girls invisible?

Q: We have a live-action property in development for girls ages eight to 12. We've been pitching it, but broadcasters struggle to know where to place it, as they are all looking for either shows for kids under eight or over 13, or they're only interested in boy-skewing properties that girls will watch. Why are tween girls an invisible, forgotten tribe?

A: Media executives need the largest audience they can get, so alienating half of the potential viewers from the outset can mean the difference between a hit and a flop. We live in a society where girls are told (both implicitly and explicitly) that it's OK to like "boy stuff," but boys learn that it's decidedly inappropriate to like "girl stuff." We hear a lot of push-back from kids about these constraints! Regardless, for media that is only targeted at one gender, the reality is that boy-targeted media and products are likely going to make more money than girl-targeted ones because the potential audience is broader.

In addition, these days, media development executives must consider the full brand potential when they are building a new intellectual property, including not just the TV show, but also its related consumer products. Kids under eight buy more toys, contributing to why shows for older kids can be a harder sell.

Here's our point of view, in the form of two directions to consider: Make your TV property (and pitch) more gender-inclusive, or develop a strong case for the consumer products potential of your girls-only TV property.

Keep your questions coming! Send your emails to CuriosityCorner@InsightKids.com

Insight Kids is a custom research and consulting firm dedicated to catalyzing our clients to build innovative, impactful and inspiring content and products for kids and families around the globe. Our team of child development experts stays on the pulse of kids' media, delving into the lives of over 50,000 families last year alone. To be further inspired by Insight Kids or discuss partnership opportunities, visit www.InsightKids.com or call Sarah Chumsky at 212-584-2313.

Cucumbers for lunch?

BY WYNNE TYREE

US kids move from fast food to whole food

For more than a decade, US marketers and legislators have been trying to reverse the youth obesity epidemic, aggressively pushing a movement from fat to fit, and from dieting to living a healthy lifestyle. Some data suggests that those efforts have made a difference; other data points to an ever-increasing waistline for parents and kids.

What has not been part of the youth lifestyles discourse is the growing number of kids who are adopting their health-actualizing parents' lifestyles. From doing mini-Mud Runners on the weekends, to toting a vegan lunch off to school, the number of kids focusing on living ultra-healthy lives is on the rise in the US.

In lunchrooms and online, you'll now see children "going paleo," living gluten-free (although the kids are not allergic to gluten), completing the Whole30, and sharing vegetarian and vegan snack ideas. A simple Google search for "paleo kids lunch" will generate countless pictures featuring meals made up of things like slices of organic chicken breast, fruit, vegetables, homemade marshmallows and even homemade gummy snacks.

For those families (primarily middle- and upper-class) opting for a more extreme diet and exercise lifestyle, fast food is no longer an option—or desirable. Similarly, they don't want artificial ingredients or, in many cases, any type of processed foods. Kids are turning up their noses at the thought of eating at McDonald's and are becoming mini-me's of their moms and dads who partake in 5K runs on the weekend and prepare meals at home.

Supporting this interest in a healthful, natural lifestyle is a new industry of books, blogs and apps designed to meet the needs of kids and families pursuing a gluten-free, paleo, or vegan lifestyle—including *The Paleo Kid Lunchbox*, *Steven the Vegan*, and many more. Popular blog nomnompaleo.com includes a whole section on packing kids' lunchboxes, and PETA.com features a kids' guide to going vegan.

We expect to see even more kid-friendly options serving these lifestyles in the supermarket soon. 

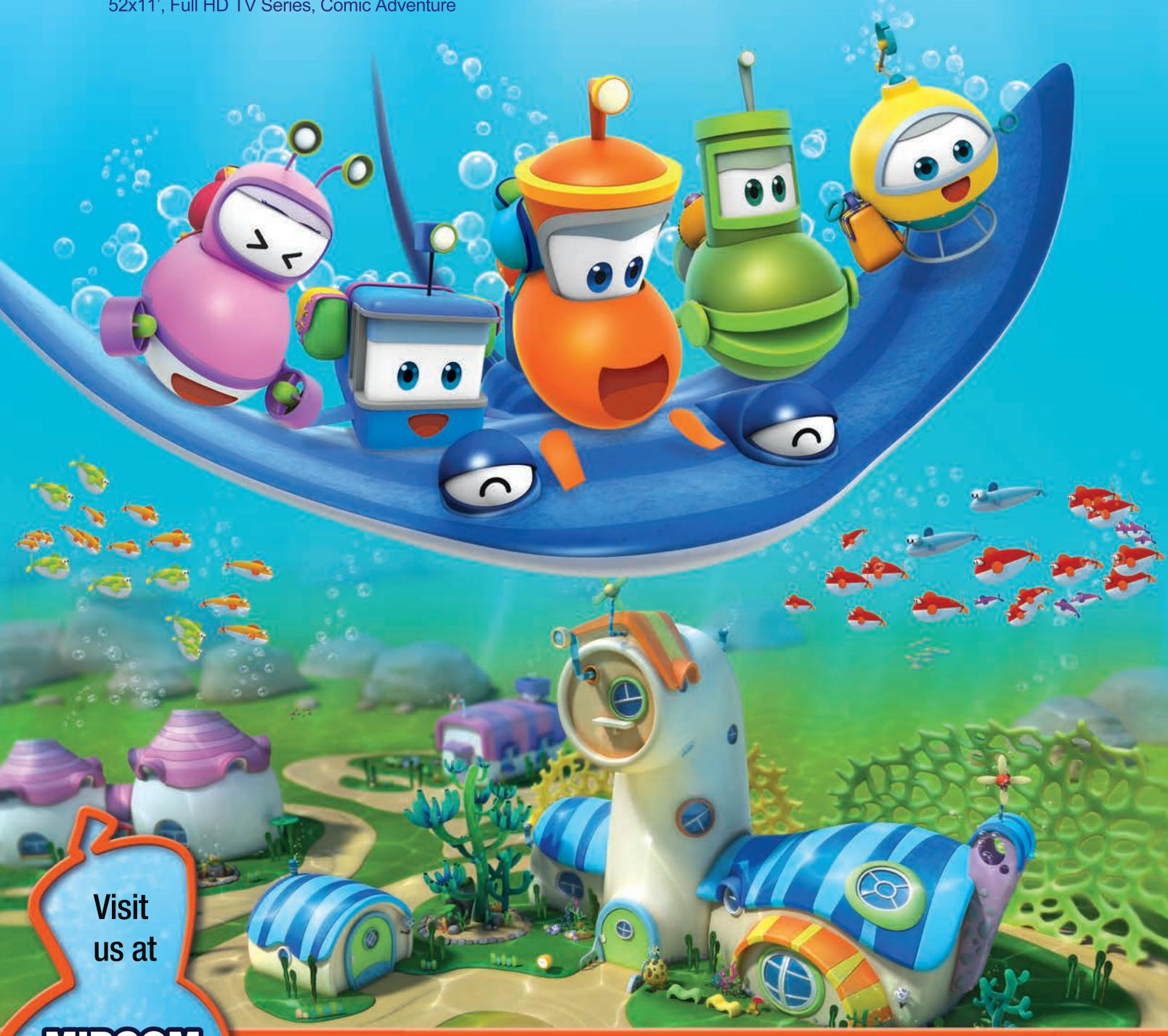


Wynne Tyree is the president of Smarty Pants, a youth and family research and consulting firm. Heads Up! is derived from the company's daily in-person and digital immersion into kids' and families' lives, as well as proprietary quantitative research. For more information contact Meredith Franck at 914-939-1897 or visit asksmartypants.com.

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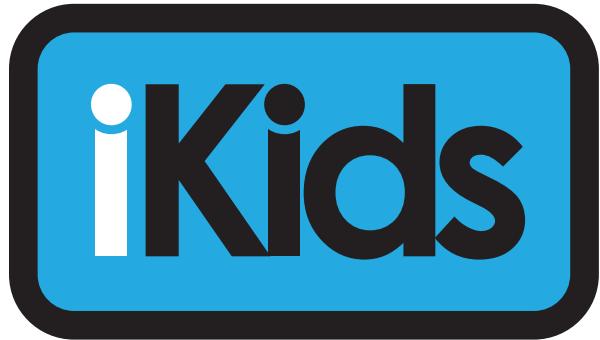
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Making its mark

With a big chunk of new funding in-hand, kids app developer Fingerprint is setting an ambitious course to launch seven app networks and 600 titles in the next year

BY DANIELA FISHER

Maya loves school and learning, but she keeps getting pulled out of class to collect clean drinking water for her family. This is the substance-filled storyline for *Get Water!*, an app that lets kids have fun in an endless runner game while teaching them about water scarcity and its impact on girls' access to education. Welcome to the world of edutainment.

Apps like this are a mainstay for kids developer Fingerprint. The San Francisco, California-based startup develops and aggregates COPPA-compliant apps with an educational focus, rolling them out on mobile networks and creating branded channels for large entertainment and education companies. Along with the custom networks, it partners with developers and content creators from around the world, giving them new avenues in which to distribute their apps.

The company made headlines earlier this year when it scored US\$10.85 million in new funding, led by kids media giant DreamWorks Animation, with significant contributions from book publisher Reed Elsevier and Corus Entertainment. Through financing and partnerships like these, Fingerprint taps into new content for its channels, which house apps, eBooks and videos.

"I decided from the very beginning that I was going to try and partner with companies in the kids space that really

had a vested interest in moving onto the mobile platform," says Fingerprint founder Nancy MacIntyre. "DreamWorks was a very logical choice, given that it has so many beloved characters and properties."

Of course the participation of big media players like DreamWorks underscores the growing popularity of digital platforms—and the fact that kids aren't leaving them anytime soon. Last year, a study from AVG Technologies on US kids' digital habits found that by age six, more of them knew how to play an app (57%) or navigate mom's or dad's smartphone (47%) than write their full name (38%) or swim (23%).

Making an impression

Fingerprint's beginnings are rooted in the launch of the first iPhone in 2007. For MacIntyre, then head of products and marketing at electronic toy giant LeapFrog, the iPhone had immediate appeal. "When you work in the educational toy business, you always think that Nintendo is the competitor," MacIntyre recalls. "But from the time the iPhone came out, it was so obvious that it was going to be the gaming platform of choice for kids, because of the touchscreen and the fact that every mom or dad who had an iPhone would now have a gaming system to hand over to their kids."

Forecasting kids' proclivity for touchscreens, MacIntyre launched Fingerprint in 2011. It was a shrewd move, given

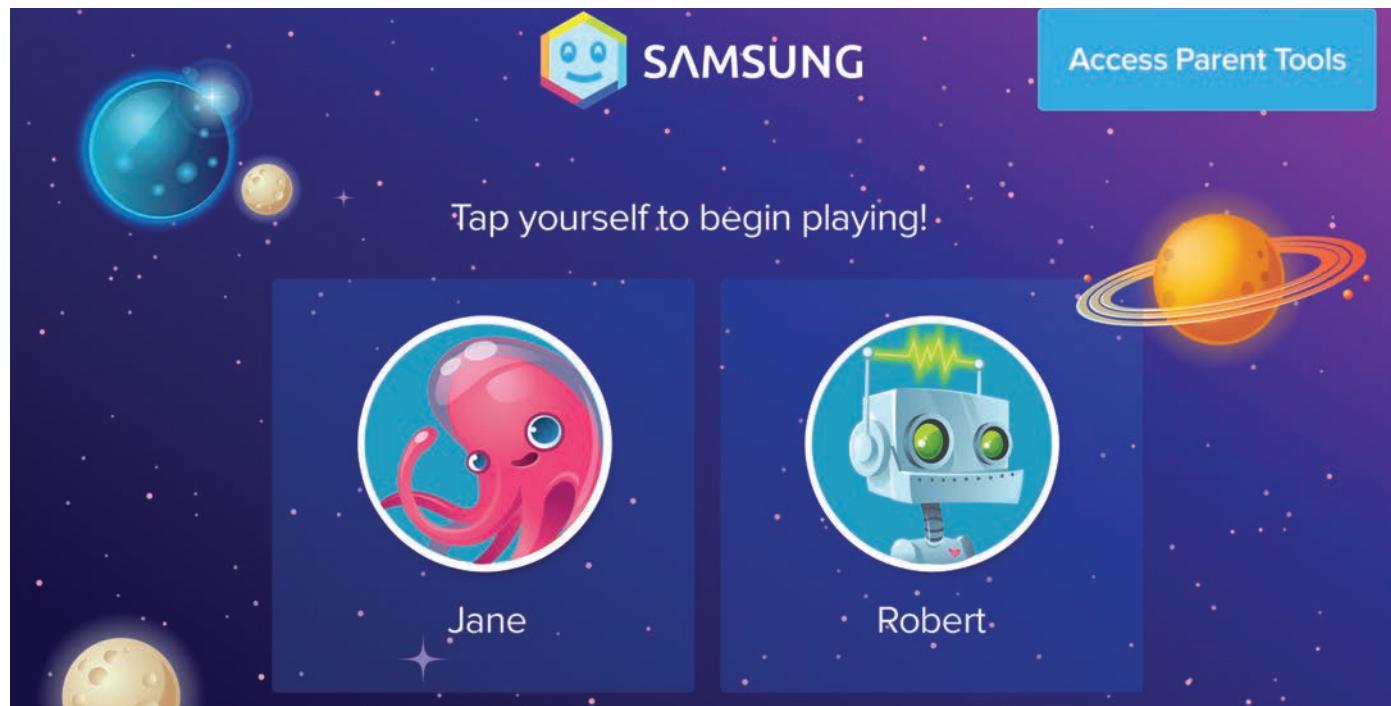
the meteoric growth of iPhone sales. In 2007, 1.7 million units were sold worldwide. That number now sits at 500 million and counting.

To date, its own consumer channel, Fingerprint Play, reaches three million families in the US that visit the mobile site four to five times a week. The company has also created mobile networks for some tech and kids heavyweights: Samsung (Samsung KidsTime) in Southeast Asia, Sylvan Learning Centers (SylvanPlay) in North America, and Astro Malaysia (AstroPlay)—the largest pay TV company in Southeast Asia. Each comes with its own branded apps and games.

nascent and we're in launch phases around the world," says MacIntyre.

Since launching, the company has seen its revenue grow tenfold. According to MacIntyre, Fingerprint typically works on a rev-share basis with partners, generating additional revenue by developing networks for its customers and licensing the technology.

The other part of its wheelhouse is working with third-party developers on new apps. The Fingerprint family currently includes 75 developers from roughly 30 countries worldwide. Developer partners include BabyFirst, Smart Education, Speakaboos, Yummico and Kidoodle.



Customized Fingerprint-made mobile channels like Samsung Kids Time are helping brands and developers overcome the challenge of discoverability on the App store

For AstroPlay, Fingerprint also made it work in four different languages—Mandarin, Malay, Tamil and English. In fact, the developer designed the channel to be local down to the last detail. "We created an avatar system that involves girls wearing headscarves and burkas," says MacIntyre. "[It's] a completely customized local experience."

While she declined to share usage numbers for the branded channels, MacIntyre notes traction is good. "We launched in Malaysia with Astro a couple months ago, and at one point had two apps in the top 10 in Malaysia's App Store. We've seen a significant amount of user growth in every market that we've launched a platform on."

All hands on deck...

With the new financing, Fingerprint plans to grow its mobile networks. By the end of 2014, the company will have seven branded networks up and running. It will also aim to introduce 600 apps, 50 eBooks and more video services, along with building a new network with educational content producer Cricket Media. "I would say it's really

Going glocal

Along with using its newfound cash for content, the money will go to staffing up the growing business and global expansion. "The kids gaming and education ecosystems around mobile content have just exploded on a global basis," notes MacIntyre. "We're dealing with developers from everywhere, from Israel and Greece, to California and Morocco."

Currently, Fingerprint's app offerings resemble a mini-United Nations, with more than 250 apps across its networks. Kids can play *Sushi Scramble* from Scottish developer TigerFace, Finland-based Fantastec's madcap app *Wonder Bunny Alphabet Race*, or the latest language learning app *Kids Learn Mandarin*. There's also more traditional kids entertainment fare, with apps that feature Arthur or the Berenstain Bears. Altogether, its collection of apps is putting Fingerprint in the reach of more kids' fingertips. "We've gone from being a company that was trying to fight it out in the App Store one app at a time, to a company really focused on running a mobile channel business," says MacIntyre. **K**

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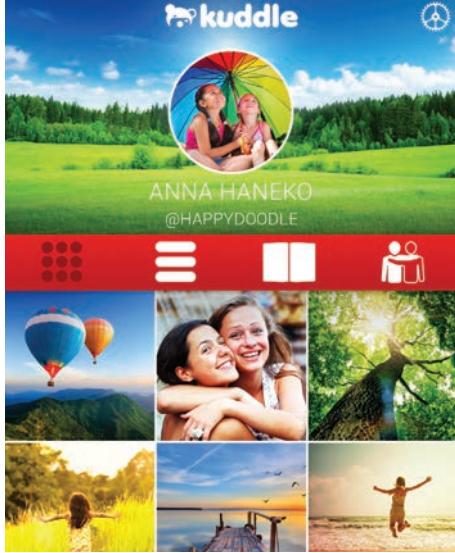
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New Kid in Town

Fair share

Kuddle gives kids a social media primer with new photo-sharing app

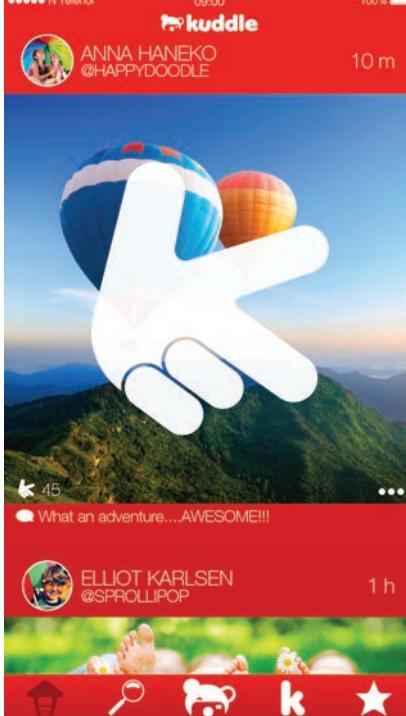
Hestaas deemed the app too grown-up for his son, he soon discovered that there was no kid-friendly alternative on the market. Working on the app with two other developers, a year later he reached out to Kuddle co-founder Kathryn Baker to see if she wanted in.

Big picture “There was nothing out there that wasn’t heavily backed by a commercial interest or that didn’t have some elements that I thought were not in a child’s best interest, like purchasing or open comment areas,” notes Baker. Having two teenage daughters at home, she remembers wishing that she had *Kuddle* when they were being introduced to social media.

The group founded the company in March, signing on 14 developers and raising US\$1 million in funding to launch the app. Now in the process of raising an additional US\$2 million, the team is making a push into the US and global markets. “The number of children who are sneaking onto inappropriate social media platforms is really exploding,” says Baker. “We wanted to get this out fast, because we think there is a great need for it.”

Positioned as an Instagram for kids, the COPPA-compliant app teaches safe sharing. While kids can caption and draw on their photos, they can’t comment on anyone else’s. To prevent popularity contests, likes are anonymous and there is no geo-tagging. Additionally, each time a user posts something, a reminder pops up asking questions like “Do you know it’s OK to remove a photo if you regret posting it?” or “Is everyone in this photo OK with you posting this?” Only by answering correctly can a child post a picture. Finally, the startup has a 24/7 monitoring system that immediately pulls down any inappropriate content—something that’s not as strict on over-13 social sites like Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

Looking ahead “We’re getting a lot of enthusiasm from parents and kids about it. It really is filling a void,” says Baker. While the core user base is in Norway and the US, Baker notes international interest is building. “We were overwhelmed by the number of users that we picked up in other languages when we really weren’t thinking that was going to happen so quickly beyond Norwegian and English.” The goal now is to get the word out about the app. The company aims to roll out 10 new languages, as well as further develop the app’s mascot, Kodi Kuddle. In terms of revenue, the startup is in discussions with international providers to bring *Kuddle* to other formats, which could see parents paying for a kid-safe branded device or mobile subscription in the future. —Daniela Fisher



The Digits

Numbers that speak volumes about kids and technology

Apple’s iPhone tops the list of the most-coveted mobile devices, with

52%

of kids wanting one and only 12% wanting a Samsung device
(Communicus)

App fatigue? comScore finds that nearly

two-thirds

of US smartphone users aren’t downloading any new apps
(comScore, US Mobile App Report)

Big spenders: A recent study found that tablet owners spend

US \$19

on apps per year, as opposed to smartphone users who spend US\$13 on apps

(Frank N. Magid Associates)



Photo: Ash Kyd

By 2019, global revenue from tablet games should reach

US \$13.3 billion—

a huge jump from US\$3.6 billion this year
(Juniper Research)

Streaming wars! As of Q2 2014, newcomer Chromecast already had a

16%

share of US households with streaming devices, compared to relative old-timers AppleTV at 39% and Roku at 28%

(The NPD Group)



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Still packing a



It took seven years and infinite patience to make sure Nerd Corps' *Slugterra* had checked all the boxes to ultimately reap boys action success

a punch

BY BRENDAN CHRISTIE

In the new world of boys action-adventure, only the strongest characters and most powerful brands can save the day

Boys action-adventure series have historically been ratings and retail sales drivers. But while girl-targeted properties like *Monster High*, *American Girl* and *My Little Pony* are producing audiences and profits for the likes of Mattel and Hasbro right now, boys seem to be staying out of stores and away from TVs when it comes to properties made just for them. Is it that there is just less enthusiasm for the action-adventure programming that typically targets young male viewers? Or is it, as many industry types contend, that broadcasters have thrown over the genre altogether for gender-neutral comedy? When it comes to the viability of boys action-adventure on-screen and in the toy aisle, one thing's for certain—times have changed.

The good old days

Sure, there's a case to be made for the industry going back to the well too many times with the same IPs. But any discussion of the current state of boys action-adventure probably should begin by acknowledging that the industry got a little too used to the view through its rose-colored glasses. It looks like we're now on the other side of the golden age of boys action-adventure.

Consider what was happening on the small screen at the turn of the millennium: *Dragonball Z* (1998), *Beyblade* (2001), *Yu-Gi-Oh!* (in English, 2001) and *Samurai Jack* (2001).

Next came *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (2003), *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (2003), *Teen Titans* (2003), *Ben 10* (2005) and *Bakugan* (2007)—and really, that's naming just a few big ratings and retail hits.

Following those TV launches, of course, were apparel, toys, video games and virtually every other licensed good imaginable. Their consumer products success set the bar pretty high. The problem is, the industry came to see this as the norm. But boys action-adventure has always been niche—a small slice of the market that's easily sated by a few shows, not to mention that elite group of big-screen superheroes from Marvel and DC Comics.

The genre has traditionally targeted boys roughly four to seven years old. (Luckily, a new crop comes along every few years, but it's still a finite market.) That's the range that Nancy Zwiers, CEO of Funosophy (a leading brand-building consulting and invention firm in the toy industry), describes as the physical empowerment age, when boys look up to the hero they want to be in an effort to try and master their world.

At that age, it's all about strength, size, speed and skill, which manifests in boys' content choices and play patterns. But by around age seven, boys start to expand their worlds, adding nuances and other influences. That's traditionally, mind you. According to a recent study from UK broadcast regulator Ofcom, six- and seven-year-olds, who have grown up with digital influences like YouTube and video streaming sites, scored an average DQ (digital quotient) of 98. People ages 45 to 49 scored an average DQ of 96, meaning many six-year-olds are slightly better-versed in technology than their parents.

With that kind of tech savvy, kids are increasingly finding and curating their own content from digital sources. "We're in a different place from 10 years ago," observes Jules Borkent, SVP of programming and acquisitions at Nickelodeon International. "Ten years ago, for a show like *Pokémon*, the main destination was TV. That was the only destination where it could really live. That situation has changed," he says. "The market is still healthy for boys action-adventure. There is absolutely a space for it on network. But I think boys have gone to different media."

It's a familiar list. Beyond linear TV and on-demand services, video shorts are readily available on proprietary platforms and outlets like YouTube. There's also merch and traditional games. There are online games, mobile

apps and social. Can action-adventure really live up to all that attention?

Not so much, some suggest. "I've heard a boy will watch a particular episode of a comedy 10 times," says Nerd Corps Entertainment president Ken Faier. "Whereas with boys action, maybe it's three times. Once you know the action element of it and the battle, you want something new. Boys will move to the next action pick pretty quickly. So typically, it rises to the top fast, but sustaining [that height] is kind of difficult."



Hasbro's next boys action series *Transformers: Robots in Disguise* will have a little more humor and a little less doom to appeal to this generation of boys

Additionally, market saturation is taking its toll, and the audience is skewing younger. To combat that, broadcasters are asking for elements that will open up the demo again.

"In times of over-the-top TV and binge-watching, nobody wants to find out repeatedly whether or not the world will be saved," surmises Patrick Elmendorff, MD at Studio 100 Media. "So it's more important to create action heroes with different facets—with friends and a family, or a unique school environment, for example. This



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Girls powering up

The tech that's hurting the boys niche might be helping to create one for girls

"In my own childhood, children's television programming was dominated by boys," says Patrick Elmendorff, MD at Studio 100 Media. "Girls were mostly the sidekicks who teamed up with boys, and from that moment on, they mostly only got in the way or served as admirers of the male heroes."

Of course there's lots of ground to make up, but the gender gap has been closing, lately thanks to characters like Elsa and Anna from

Disney's *Frozen*, Merida (and even Queen Elinor) from the studio's *Brave*, and others. And girl-targeted properties like *Monster High* and *My Little Pony* are kicking it at retail and pretty much everywhere else.

"Girls have aspirations to be like their heroines," says Patricia Hidalgo, SVP and chief kids content and creative officer for Turner



Girl-targeted *Monster High* is attracting boys and girls through its cool characters and fun stories

Broadcasting System EMEA. "And when we think about heroines like *The Powerpuff Girls*, which we are bringing back, they also appeal to boys. When you look at some other titles that we have, like *Stephen Universe* and *Ben 10*, we have strong female characters who are extremely popular with girls. There is always a market there for girls to be inspired by heroines and action."

Girls may never be as driven by action as their male counterparts are, but at least they're getting more recognition.

automatically leads from a mere action plot to a mixture of action, drama and comedy."

In fact, broadcasters are demanding it. "When we have channels that want to appeal to a broader audience, you cannot really think that small or just concentrate on a certain number of kids," agrees Patricia Hidalgo, SVP and chief kids content and creative officer at Turner Broadcasting System EMEA. "You have to go broader. So broadcasters are looking for the other things in those action-adventure shows that are really resonating within a specific slot."

Comedy is the current solution. It picks up boy viewers about halfway through the traditional action-adventure demo, but it holds their attention far longer and also grabs girls and parents.

"I think the market goes in phases," observes Nick's Borkent. "At the moment, we see a lot of drive towards comedy in all genres, whether that is animation, or live-action, or even preschool."

That doesn't mean action is disappearing from the air. It's just returning to more familiar slots. "Primetime comedy is desirable for broadcasters because they get a more balanced, gender-neutral audience with it," says Finn Arnesen, SVP of international distribution and development at Hasbro Studios. "But I still think there is a slot and a space for action-adventure."

"I think that the girls market was really underserved until these shows came along," says Finn Arnesen, SVP of international distribution and development at Hasbro Studios. "There was that middle ground back in the '90s and early 2000s when you had *The Life and Times of Juniper Lee* on Cartoon Network and *Kim Possible* on Disney. There were female action-hero characters in essentially action-adventure shows, but I think now you have these genuine properties that are directly focused on the girls audience. And they're very successful—because they're good. They are doing exactly what they say on the tin."

Ken Faier, president of Nerd Corps Entertainment, which works on Mattel hit *Monster High*, says digital platforms have helped target the girls market. So it's ironic then that what might be hurting the boys action-adventure genre is helping to create a better space for girls.

"I think the biggest thing is that there are more ways to reach girls," says Faier. "Ten years ago, it would have been extremely difficult to get a TV series that targeted girls onto network TV. If you had a pure girl show, you'd have lost your boy audience. So networks didn't want to do them."

"*Monster High* is interesting because it skews slightly older, and they are kind of good-looking monsters. So you attract an eight-, nine- or 10-year-old boy who is kind of interested in girls, but not really. They also get an aspirational view of what high school might be like in a funny way—in an action way. So it actually attracts a pretty even [boy-girl] audience."

Nickelodeon spells out *Monster High* as specials on broadcast, but the property really flourished online with shorts and games. It was a strategy that perfectly targeted girls in an environment they love. "There are ways to reach them cost-effectively," says Faier. "Girls are using that technology, and I think there is a way to reach them with entertainment that goes beyond just a traditional TV show that would have been hard to place before." -Brendan Christie

Arnesen says he is seeing action fitting into early mornings—the before-school 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. slots—sprinkled sparingly through the day, and returning for Saturday and Sunday mornings. "It's almost like a return to those Saturday morning cartoons that were full of action-adventure, before the comedy comes in. If it's scheduled cleverly and carefully, then I still think there's a space for everything."

But action is a slightly different beast from what it was even a decade ago. When it came to developing the new *Transformers* series, for example, Arnesen says Hasbro listened to the audience and broadcasters, who suggested the brand had become a little too serious. The new series, *Transformers: Robots in Disguise*, will rely more on comedy, and one of the central characters is Russell, a 13-year-old boy who meets the Autobots and helps them figure out how to live and hide on Earth. In other words, it will be about relationships as much as it is about world-saving action.

"You need a compelling main character that kids are going to identify with," Arnesen contends. "You have to have somebody who is relatively ordinary in an extraordinary situation, because that's going to be interesting to kids. If it is someone who is just all-powerful, then there is no jeopardy. And if there is no jeopardy, there is no consequence, and anything can happen. You have to be able to tell a story where kids care about the characters and will come back for more to see what is happening in each week's episode."

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For its part, Cartoon Network has even re-imagined traditional superheroes for a wider audience. *Teen Titans Go!*, from partner Warner Bros. Animation, is a show that follows the Teen Titans when they're not saving the world. "That's an extremely comedic and very successful show," says Turner's Hidalgo. "It's been working really well with both the younger and the older demos. Comedy is a much broader thing, and more appealing to everyone."

Nick's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* has also benefited from a TV update. "There is something in the DNA of Turtles that appeals to the broader audience," notes Borkent. "Although it's a franchise that is well known, we still have to make it relevant to today's audience. We did some research on the appeal of the show, and it really boiled down to the friendship between the brothers and the comedy. That's what we are finding really makes the show right for us and appealing."

Borkent advises creators that they need to invest more time in developing stories and characters than they did in the past, if they want them to be successful. "I think the audience is more spoiled due to the options they have open to them," he says. "So it needs to be something a bit different. It's hard to think of everything that has been done before, but you definitely have to be original—that's really key. How do you set yourself apart by really creating something appealing and funny, and something that boys can really relate to?"

Growing pains

But getting that new, innovative IP up-and-running is hardly a painless process. Seven years into development and roll out, Canada-based Nerd Corps Entertainment is having global success with its *Slugterra* property. President Ken Faier notes that the budget for the first season was US\$17 million, plus more than US\$1 million for the website and games, and a few more million for a feature film—then there is the new season that's been greenlit.

"That's the challenge," says Faier of the outlay. "You have to run your numbers very carefully to see the return on investment." He contends that the difficulty for anyone in this space is to continually introduce new elements for a property. "But then how do you invest in it," he muses. "How much do you invest in it, and when and where? You try to create new ways for kids to enjoy this thing that they love, but if you give them too much at once, they burn through it really quickly and they want more."

Launching *Slugterra* has been a gamble that has paid off for Nerd Corps. But what comes next? "We have been very careful with the next one," admits Faier. "*Slugterra* is awesome—so how do we get something that is as good or better? We have actually scrapped a few things that we have had in development. They start as small ideas and kind of evolve, but then we get to a place and say, 'You know, it's just not good enough.' It has to tick every box. So we have been careful, and in fact, most of our current development slate is not boys action."

Nerd Corps has two preschool shows in development and it recently launched *Kate and Mim-Mim* with FremantleMedia Kids & Family Entertainment on CBeebies. (It was the number-one show in its time slot for its first week on air.) The company is also pitching for the rights to a feature film property that Faier says would make a great kids TV series.

Interestingly, Nerd Corps has spent more time looking outside its own walls than it ever has before for new concepts. "Ace [Nerd founder Asaph Fipke] created a lot of the properties we've done in the past," says Faier. "But we've evolved. We've built an infrastructure to do stuff like *Slugterra* and we are looking for others who have a creative idea and the requisite passion. We have about 10 things in development right now, and nine of them are from external creators. That's very different from where we were two or three years ago, and it allows us to play with more stuff."

"I think the market is still healthy for boys action-adventure. There is absolutely a space for it on network. But I think boys have gone to different media."

—Jules Borkent, Nickelodeon International

Nerd Corps isn't the only company that has spent nearly a decade in development on its boys brand. In the UK, Platinum Films has invested just as much time and capital into its *Matt Hatter Chronicles* franchise, which has sold into more than 80 countries worldwide, has a robust digital presence, a feature film in the works and countless other well-considered ancillary extensions.

"It is such a sophisticated bit of business now," says Platinum CEO Nigel Stone. "It isn't a situation where a couple of great creatives can sit in a room and make a show. It is so much more than that." He admits that if the same challenges that exist today had been around seven years ago, he probably wouldn't have embarked on production. "We now have two seasons and US\$22 million of spend under our belt, as well as millions of dollars in digital assets. But we can compete with some of the big companies. If we had to start from scratch, we just wouldn't be able to compete," he says. "Even saying that, it's been tough—even with all the success and response we've had—it's still tough as an independent competing with some of the biggest brands in the world."

Although it was a long run-up to the show's 2011 debut, Stone says the investment in story and character development is paying off. "[*Matt Hatter*] spent four years in the

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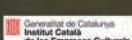
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cooking pot before we hit screen," he says. During that time, the team plotted out what the feature film, toy, consumer product and digital extensions would look like in lockstep with the core TV series development.

"We have launched novels with Penguin that are really well thought through, and that give you what the TV show gives you," says Stone. "And those lead to stuff that you are only ever going to find out on the web—everything links to everything else. It goes back to, 'How do you compete internationally with the big studios?' You have to be as good as them."

Because of the involved lead-up to Matt Hatter's launch, Stone says Platinum limits the number of shows it develops at one time. "We don't have a huge number of properties," he says. "Many producers will say, 'Do you want a girls show under five? Do you want a girls show over seven? I have a girl/boy show for 12-year-olds.' It's almost like they have a raincoat that opens up with multiple shows hanging from the inside. I don't understand how they manage to do that. I think they're brilliant to be able to do that because we can't. We can only handle a few brands—and that's the key word there—brands.

"I believe you make a choice about what your studio is. If it's a production studio, then that's great. You can make a show, and then another one, and another one. But if you are creating brands, then I believe you can only make a few, because that brand has to include a TV piece, and it better have a strong digital component—not just a bolt-on that happens at the end of production. And then you better have a support mechanism to be able to work with consumer products, retail and PR."

The economics of risk-aversion

It's become a harder needle to thread because there are so many elements in the package now, and all have to be fully developed and fleshed out. Meanwhile, the industry has grown more risk-averse, and the niche for boys action-adventure is shrinking.

But there's still hope for creators who want to appeal to boys. "I don't think that broadcasters have shifted away from action-adventure," says Platinum's Stone. "They've just shifted away from action-adventure that was more of the same."

Innovation is still the key to success, even if it's a longer road to get there. So maybe things aren't all that different.

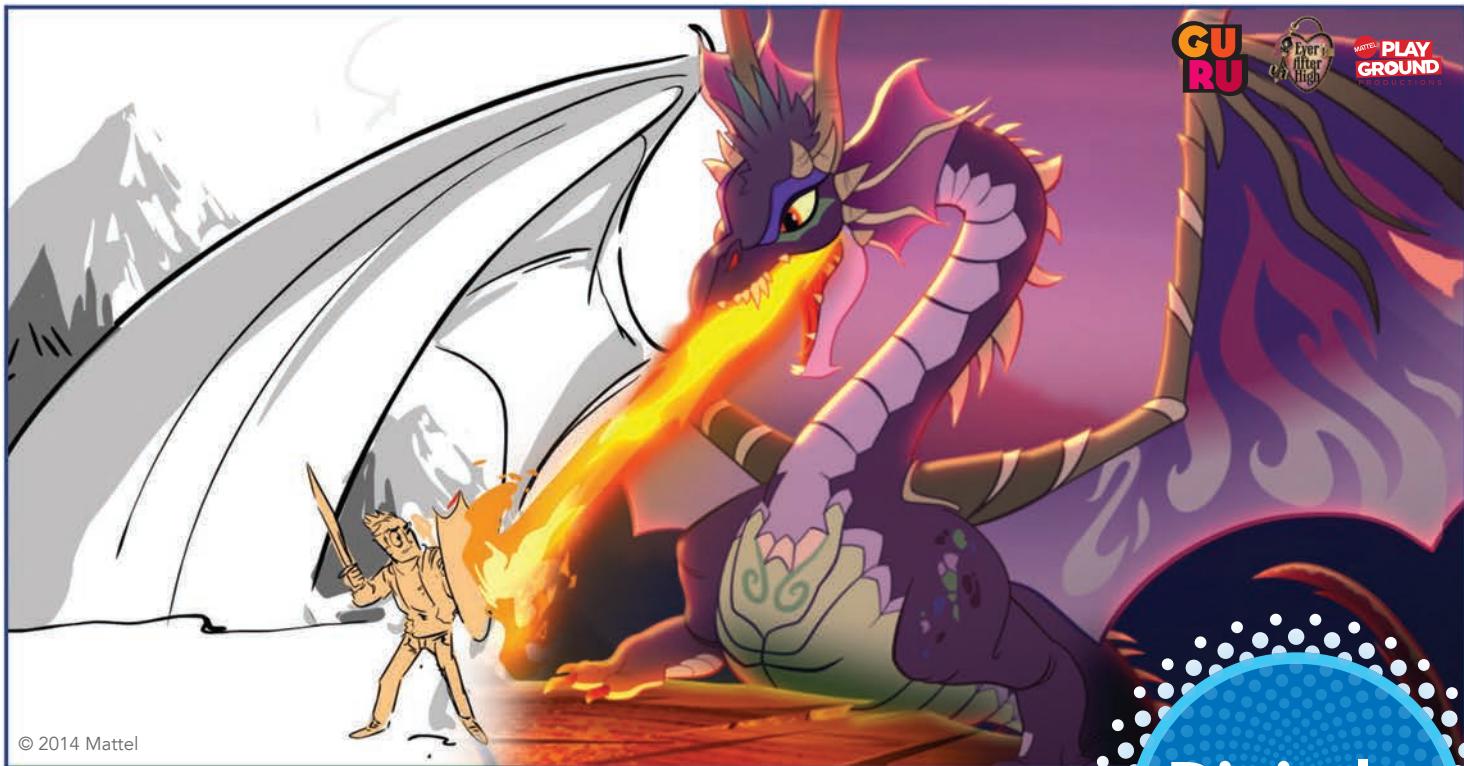
"Who knew *SpongeBob* would be a hit," questions Hasbro's Arnesen. "It took five years for that to take hold, then it became a massive hit. It wasn't an instant toy hit out of the gate. Everyone knows that action-adventure is challenging at the moment, so you have to take steps to put that right and change the nature of what you do and what you are offering to the consumer," he says. "There's still money and appetite there, if you execute well. If you have a great idea, tell good stories and execute your ancillaries well, then you are going to have a hit. I guess that's the encouraging point—it's not all doom and gloom." **K**

Nickelodeon's latest *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* series has butt-kicking action tempered with a lot of humor that's drawing both genders





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Cool new shows!

BY LANA CASTLEMAN



4 to 7

Concept With JAM's innovative live-action/animated series *Roy* heading into its fourth season for CBBC, the Beeb Scotland suggested the Irish prodco might try aging down the concept for older preschoolers. So while *Little Roy* follows main character and cartoon boy Roy as he adjusts to life in a non-animated world, he is not just a shorter version of his predecessor. JAM CEO John Rice says he knew the premise had to be different and looked to his own son to inform the makeup of a six-year-old Roy. So like Rice's son, we find that the younger Roy is a bit of a daydreamer with little of the self-awareness that becomes oftentimes painful by the time kids reach their tweens. And what do cartoon boys dream of? In each ep, we'll see Little Roy taking on the persona of his favorite toon superhero (Wonder Boy) in a fully animated short segment, where he can imagine he's fighting the evil that is Dr. Danger, while in reality he's drifted off in the middle of doing things like helping to clean up the kitchen. JAM is also looking at formatting the series for local markets.

Little Roy

Producer JAM Media (Ireland, UK)

Style 2D animation/live action

Format 52x11 minutes, plus 52 x five-minute *Wonder Roy* segments

Budget US\$11.5 million

Status A bible, animation tests and scripts are complete.

Delivery Late 2015



Little Charmers

Co-producers Nelvana Studios, Spin Master Entertainment (both Canada)

Style CGI animation

Format 68x11 minutes, plus six 22-minute specials

Budget US\$400,000/half hour

Status In production. A global broadcast deal with Nickelodeon has also been locked down.

Delivery Early 2015

Concept Nelvana VP and studio head Irene Weibel and Jennifer Dodge, VP and executive producer at Spin Master, hatched the idea for this cute series focused on the magic of close, supportive friendships. Best friends Hazel, Posey and Lavender are Charmers in training. Hazel may feel the weight of her burgeoning magical powers most—her mother is mayor of hometown Charmville and one day Hazel will inherit the job. In the meantime, that doesn't stop the girls from banding together to solve problems and make things right, inciting plenty of magical mix-ups to keep viewers entertained.

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Cupcake & Dinosaur: General Services

Co-producers Birdo (Brazil), eOne (Canada, UK)

Style Mixed media

Format 52 x 11 minutes

Budget US\$350,000/half hour

Status In development. A bible, trailer and two scripts will be complete for MIPCOM.

Delivery Early 2016



7 to 12

Concept The brainchild of Birdo principal Pedro Eboli, creator of Cartoon LatAm hit *Oswaldo*, this visually arresting comedy revolves around two unlikely siblings. There's curmudgeonly Cupcake, whose pink frosting is a sharp contrast to his cranky demeanor, and gentle giant Dinosaur, who is as affable as his brother is ornery. To make extra money, the pair operates an odd jobs service from Aisle 6 (the lima bean aisle) of their local grocery store, where they are also stock boys. Along with Cupcake and Dinosaur having to do many weird and random jobs that come their way, a lot of the series' dry wit and humor is driven by the writers playing off character preconceptions.



preschool

Chatter Zoo

Co-producers The Jim Henson Company (US), Nine Eyes Stone (China)

Style Henson digital puppetry

Format 26 x half hours

Budget US\$350,000/half hour

Status In pre-production, with a pilot and 15 scripts completed.

Delivery Fall 2015

Concept Launched first as an app in August 2013, and now moving to its next platform, *Chatter Zoo* focuses on helping kids 18 months to three years old build their vocabularies. According to Halle Stanford, EVP of children's television at Henson, two-year-olds have the capacity to learn four to five words a day. So the series' main cast of zoo baby animals appeals to the older kids watching at home to take care of them, often looking directly at the viewer as they ask for help, teaching a host of new words and concepts along the way.

Rock

Co-producers Clear Choice Entertainment, Moody Studios (both US)

Style 2D animation

Format 52 x 11 minutes

Budget US\$350,000/half hour

Status In development, with completed bible, first scripts and 50% of the financing in-hand.

Delivery 2015



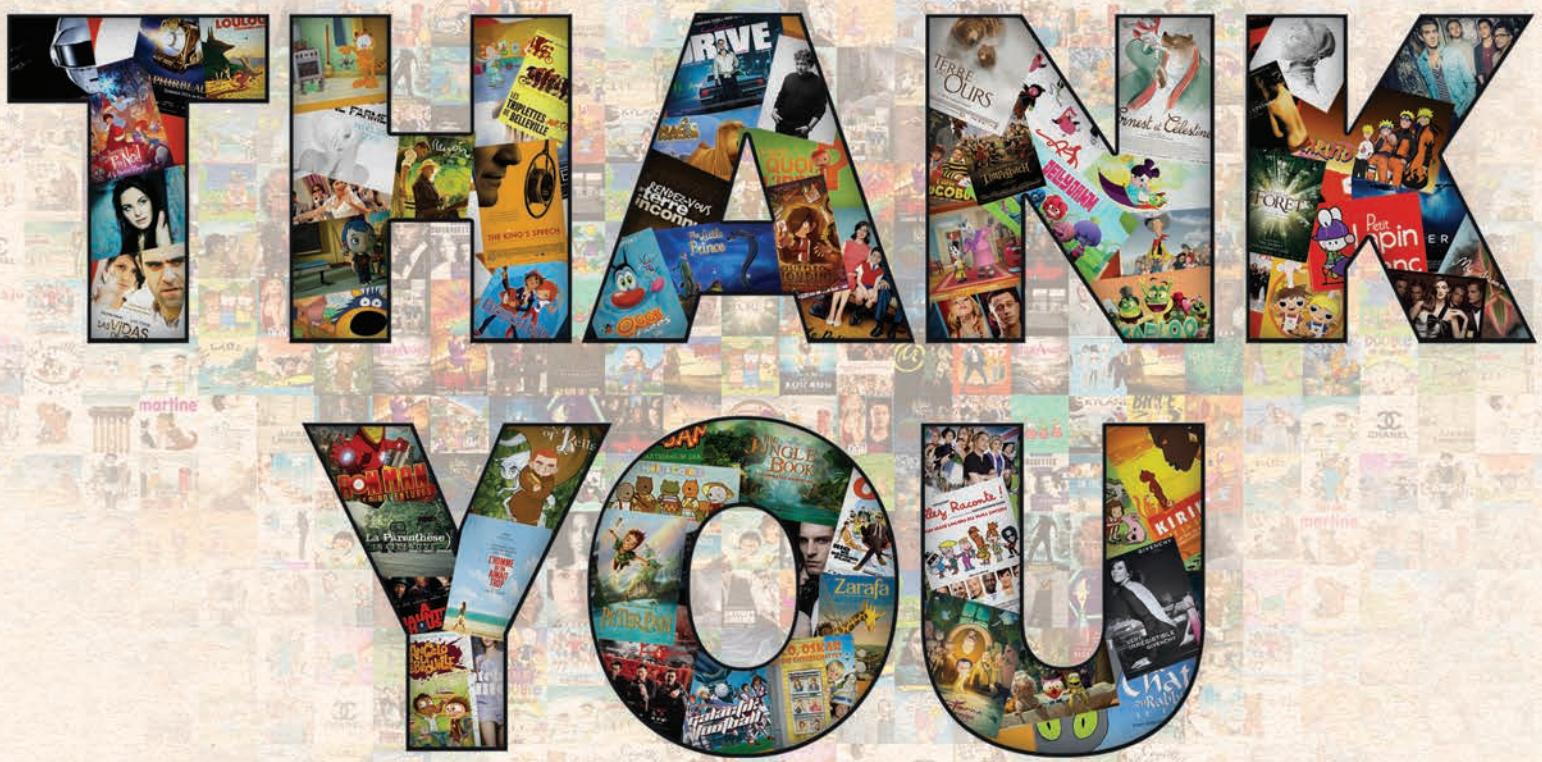
8 to 11

Concept In this comedic twist on the fish-out-of-water tale, we find star musician Rock, who wakes up one day to discover he's been transported from the 21st century to the Stone Age. While he never stops trying to get home, Rock also attempts to make the best of his life in a world where electricity, let alone the iPhone, has yet to be invented. As such, much of the comedy is driven by Rock's attempts at bringing modern-day tech to the prehistoric village. For example, he tries to invent a Stone Age jacuzzi with less-than-stellar results. Co-producer Don Moody says Rock's mythical world opens up a lot of opps for off-screen activity, including apps and consumer products.

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Talking tech

Staying one step ahead of the digital curve is crucial for keeping stories relevant to this generation of plugged-in kids. Read on for a look at new—and re-newed—IPs that have infused their storylines with a contemporary tech twist.

Henson's *Doozers* is keeping its tech fresh by showcasing wholly original inventions inspired by currently recognizable objects

BY ELIZABETH GRANT

When *Transformers* debuted in 1984, the sci-fi premise was super high-tech. Based on a line of Japanese toys, the series chronicled a war between giant alien robots that had crashed to Earth and could transform into vehicles. Back then, the internet as we know it didn't exist, and kids six to 12 lived in households without personal computers.

Fast forward 30 years, and robots, smart cars and iPhones are all part of children's lives. "We've come a pretty long way, so having a robot that can transform

into a Camaro doesn't have quite the excitement it did when I was a kid," says Michael Vogel, VP of development at Hasbro Studios, which is underway with the latest instalment of the franchise. *Transformers: Robots in Disguise* will premiere next year on US-based Hub Network with a brand-new crop of Autobots summoned by Optimus Prime to save Earth under the supervision of Bumblebee.

"Most of our boys action shows, including *Transformers*, are always set just slightly enough in the future that we can give our human characters and our Autobot and Decepticon characters technology that's just a bit more

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advanced than what we have today." Autobots now have touchscreens in their cars and the characters use holographic technology, which Hasbro is betting won't be out-of-date before the series goes into repeats.

"We put things just far enough into the future that the technology can be a little bit advanced. That's combined with the fact that at the end of the day, we're telling a story about intelligent, cybernetic life forms from a far-off planet that have space ships, lasers and spacebridges," says Vogel.

Though Hasbro is keeping tight-lipped on the digital plans for the latest TV iteration of Transformers, Vogel says to expect an announcement on how the storytelling will extend to multiple platforms later this year.

Keeping relevant is part of the kids landscape, where Dora now has a cell phone and Barbie has embarked on a career as a tech entrepreneur. But besides reflecting modern technology in the stories they tell, kids content creators are getting even more savvy about extending technological themes through immersive digital experiences that help build digital literacy.

Tablet nation

Fuhu fuses tech and entertainment across devices, TV series

When it comes to bringing technology to kids entertainment, kid-focused tablet maker Fuhu is raising the bar.

The California-based company has gone meta with its preschool series, *Albert and Junior*, a 24 x five-minute series that follows the adventures of three-year-old Albert and his best friend Junior, a tablet modeled after Fuhu's nabi Jr. device.

Junior helps Albert learn about various featured topics, as tablets do. Fuhu SVP of marketing, Lisa Lee, says the series encourages toddlers' natural curiosity to discover and explore the world around them, adding that more tablet characters and new storylines are on the way.

In the meantime, the company has created Morpho Pods, a new tablet-based play experience that connects physical and digital play around DreamWorks Animation's *How to Train Your Dragon*. Morpho Pods are palm-sized toys that spring open to reveal an interlocking head, body or tail of a dragon and merge physical play with digital play. "With the physical play aspect, kids mix the interlocking pods to create their own unique dragons

based on different characters. For example, they can connect the head of Toothless, body of Stormfly and tail of Hookfang to create a unique toy figurine," says Lee.

For the digital play, kids tap each of the dragon parts to the nabi dreamtab HD8 tablet (co-developed with DreamWorks) to unlock special power-ups in a video game. In development are interactive eBooks and customized animations for special character moments.

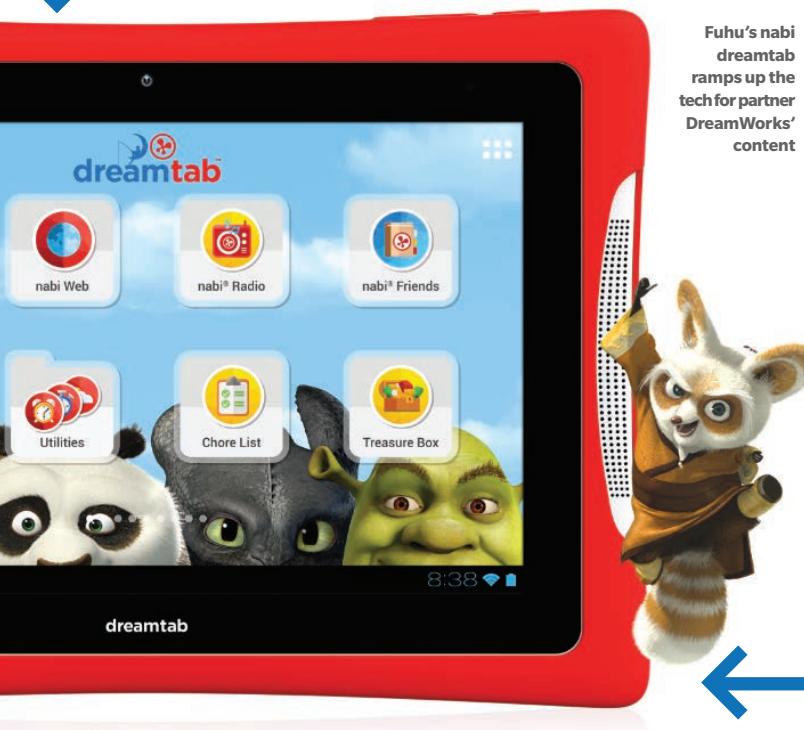
The pods use Near Field Communication (NFC), a short-range wireless technology that transfers data commands between two devices, most commonly used by the mobile industry and a few other NFC-based toys in the marketplace, like Activision's Skylanders and Disney Infinity.

Fuhu Morpho Pods allow kids to unlock special powers in the videogame *School of Dragons*, a science-focused 3D multiplayer online role-playing game developed by JumpStart. The device also unlocks an eBook app for an interactive animated storytelling experience to create new adventures with Hiccup, Toothless and other characters from the property. When kids launch the app and tap the Morpho Pods to the back of the tablet, they are greeted by lead dragon Toothless, who guides them in choosing their reading level.

And finally, the company just revealed another potential game-changer in the kids tablet space—the Nabi Big Tab, which comes in 20-inch and 24-inch HD Android formats.

"We wanted to create a tablet for family time; an ideal shared device for everyone in the family at the same time," says Lee. She adds that the tablet has a slew of features for co-viewing and playing, including checkers, tic-tac-toe, air hockey, watchable apps with content from Cartoon Network, DHX Media and Disney, interactive eBooks from iStory Time and Speakaboos, and drawing and video apps from Dream Pro Studio.

Besides transforming the traditional tablet play experience from independent to collaborative, Lee says the bigger screen will create a different type of digital experience altogether. Interaction and socialization through collaborative play and communication will change tablet play patterns and experiences. "For example, with the Big Canvas, where creativity experiences such as drawing and painting go from a notepad-like display of a 7-inch or 8-inch screen to an easel-like one on the 20-inch and 24-inch Big Tab, allows kids to create together at the same time. -Elizabeth Grant





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Archie
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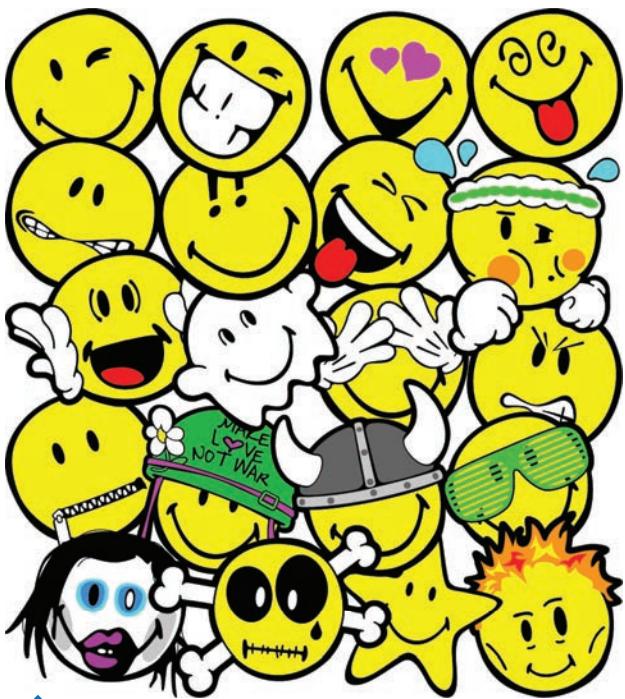
AN ARMY OF FROGS



Splash

splash
Entertainment

From text to TV



Licensed character The Smiley Face is moving to TV, thanks to a deal with PGS Entertainment and Theresa Plummer-Andrews

For example, last month BBC Children's rolled out two new computer- and coding-themed TV series on CBBC are designed to take a hands-on approach to discovering technology and developing key digital skills.

Appslute Genius follows characters Dick and Dom as they learn about the people who shaped the world of coding, gaming and computer programming, and it challenges kids to build games for the chance to create a real app. *Technobabble*, meanwhile, is a futuristic technology series that explores concepts like virtual reality and reviews the latest in apps, games and digital feats. And for the four to six set, CBeebies will also launch *Nina and the Neurons: Go Digital*, starring Nina and a team of experimenters who learn about the internet, coding, animation, driverless cars and 3D printing.

Digital makeover

Based on characters that hatched in the 1980s as a cute, industrial army of mini-building engineers on The Jim Henson Company's *Fraggle Rock*, *Doozers* launched in April as an original series for Hulu Kids. It features updated industrial gadgets for the wee engineers, as well as a fully realized science curriculum that dovetails with the *Doozer Creek* app.

In creating the series, producers were careful to show the Doozer squad interacting with technology in their daily lives. But in order to keep it fresh and prevent the technology from looking dated, the Doozers use completely original technology inspired by things that viewers at home might recognize. For example, there are no cell phones, but characters use their wrist communicators and map out their inventions on a hologram device.

One way to integrate a digital theme into a multiplatform series is to start with a property already synonymous with texting and mobile sharing—smiley faces and emojis.

Emojis—those faces and symbols that have evolved the emoticon vocabulary of today's generation—are ripe for storytelling, according to Saban Brands and toyco Jakks Pacific, which are producing Emojiville. The multiplatform property will kick off as an original web series this fall, with the goal of developing a long-form TV series down the line.

"With the explosion of the mobile lifestyle and texting over the past few years, we saw the content potential with these universally expressive symbols," says Brian Casentini, SVP of development and production at Saban Brands. To flesh out the storylines, Casentini says the series will morph emojis into comical CGI characters and follow their interactions in the crazy world of Emojiville. Saban has tapped *Robot Chicken* head writer Doug Goldstein to work a high level of comedy into the scripts.

Billions of these cute and expressive characters are shared by people across the globe every day, and we know interactivity is key with this brand," says Casentini. "We have lots up our sleeves in this area for Emojiville."

Meanwhile, OuiDO! Productions, Paris-based distributor PGS Entertainment and producer Theresa Plummer-Andrews have joined forces to develop a kids series based on The Smiley Face character, which is also set to incorporate a multiplatform experience with apps and games.

"We began with the face," says The Smiley Face CEO Nicolas Loufrani, on how a simple logo is brought to life in its own TV series. "And don't think it's the easy part, because we want to develop a unique set of characters that will be very distinct from Smiley's core business as a brand." Loufrani says the characters will have bodies and their own distinct smiley faces, and the series itself will include inspirational lessons that help kids understand a range of emotions. -Elizabeth Grant

"Interacting with and embracing the use of technology is a part of the Doozers curriculum," says Anna Jordan, VP of digital development and interactive media at The Jim Henson Company. "Apps play a role in teaching, not only through the content in the games, but also by encouraging kids to explore the devices available to them, allowing them to feel encouraged and empowered to use today's technology and be inspired to embrace, and even create, the technology of the future."

With the series' companion app, players place characters, vehicles and buildings from Doozer Creek on a blank playmat and then watch Doozers sing, play and drive with an aim to foster problem-solving, spatial reasoning and basic engineering skills.

Making technology accessible

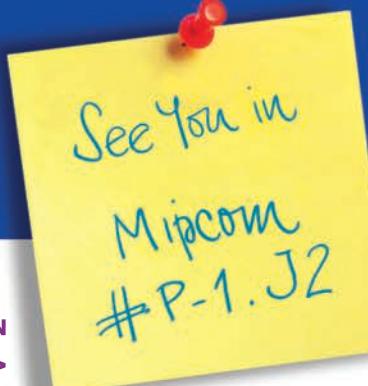
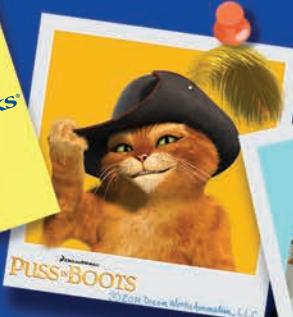
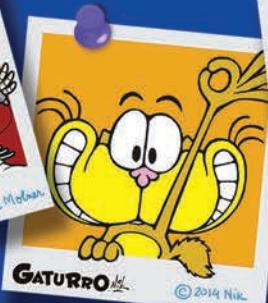
Co-founder and president of Boston-based media development firm FableVision, Gary Goldberger says when bringing technology themes to life with interactive features, it's important to look at the most optimal play pattern for an age group and a device, and then use that play pattern to engage. "You have to figure out if, on a phone, they will watch a lot of short-burst, multiple touch points throughout the day, or if they will sit down and play for 15 minutes," he says.

FableVision develops educational and entertainment experiences for kids and works with educational publishers, broadcasters, researchers and institutions, including Scholastic, Sesame Workshop, PBS KIDS and The Jim Henson Company, developing software, apps, animated websites and digital storybooks.

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Goldberger predicts bringing stories to life on devices in the near future will involve “technology that allows kids to come closer to the screen and will move away from external input devices.”

In particular, he says to keep an eye out for kids applications that use Leap Motion, which uses motion capture to track finger and palm movements and allows users to grab and move things on a screen by just making a movement.

Just exactly how Leap Motion could be integrated into game play is still to be seen. “There would no longer need to be a touch screen, we’d just be swiping air,” says Goldberger. “How would that affect younger kids? How long can you play like that? Will that change the interactions you can have or want to have? All these questions arise with new devices.”

Goldberger also cautions about creating experiences for kids that involve augmented reality. “Ideally you should create an experience where the device goes away, which makes augmented reality a little clunky right now because you are putting the device in front of the content.”

The medium is the message

Spain’s Imira Entertainment, however, has created content with augmented reality that it hopes will bring the experience full circle. The company is harnessing the digital technology to bring an inherently tech-based story to life in a new series called *Planet Play*. The series itself is based on another futuristic concept that might not be so far off—a world where everyone has a personal robot.

The premise will no doubt resonate with kids who have helicopter parents keeping them tethered to their cell phones. It follows the adventures of a kid named Play, and takes place on planet Orbitrom23 where all children are assigned a bot—a mixture of babysitter, health monitor and smartphone—that allows parents to have their children supervised at all times. However, these bots also let kids make video calls, send text messages, project images and access the internet. So before long, Play and his friends modify their bots to do what they want.

“The bots allow us to seamlessly incorporate the use of technology and Artificial Intelligence themes, as well as giving the series its futuristic feel,” says Sergi Reitg, CEO of Imira.



The property uses augmented reality on tablets and smartphones while viewers are watching either on traditional TV sets or online, which Reitg says fits with the technological theme of the series and its content. For example, when a character on the series uses a botcard—a programmed card with specific powers—the augmented reality component, indicated by a symbol on the screen, will allow viewers to use their tablet or smartphone to access more information about that botcard’s powers. Additionally, viewers will be able to see the whole planet and its characters in 3D and rotate it with their fingers.

Reitg explains the augmented reality component activates through an app that recognizes a programmed symbol on screen. When the viewer points a smartphone or tablet at the symbol, additional 3D images, which seem real, appear through the app. The augmented reality experience will appear two or three times in each episode, lasting from 60 to 90 seconds.

“For any series, the important thing is to have a solid story and leading characters,” says Reitg. “The challenge here has been to incorporate the technology into the storyline itself and make sure it strengthens it, adds freshness and provides an original twist to entertain audiences first and foremost.” **k**



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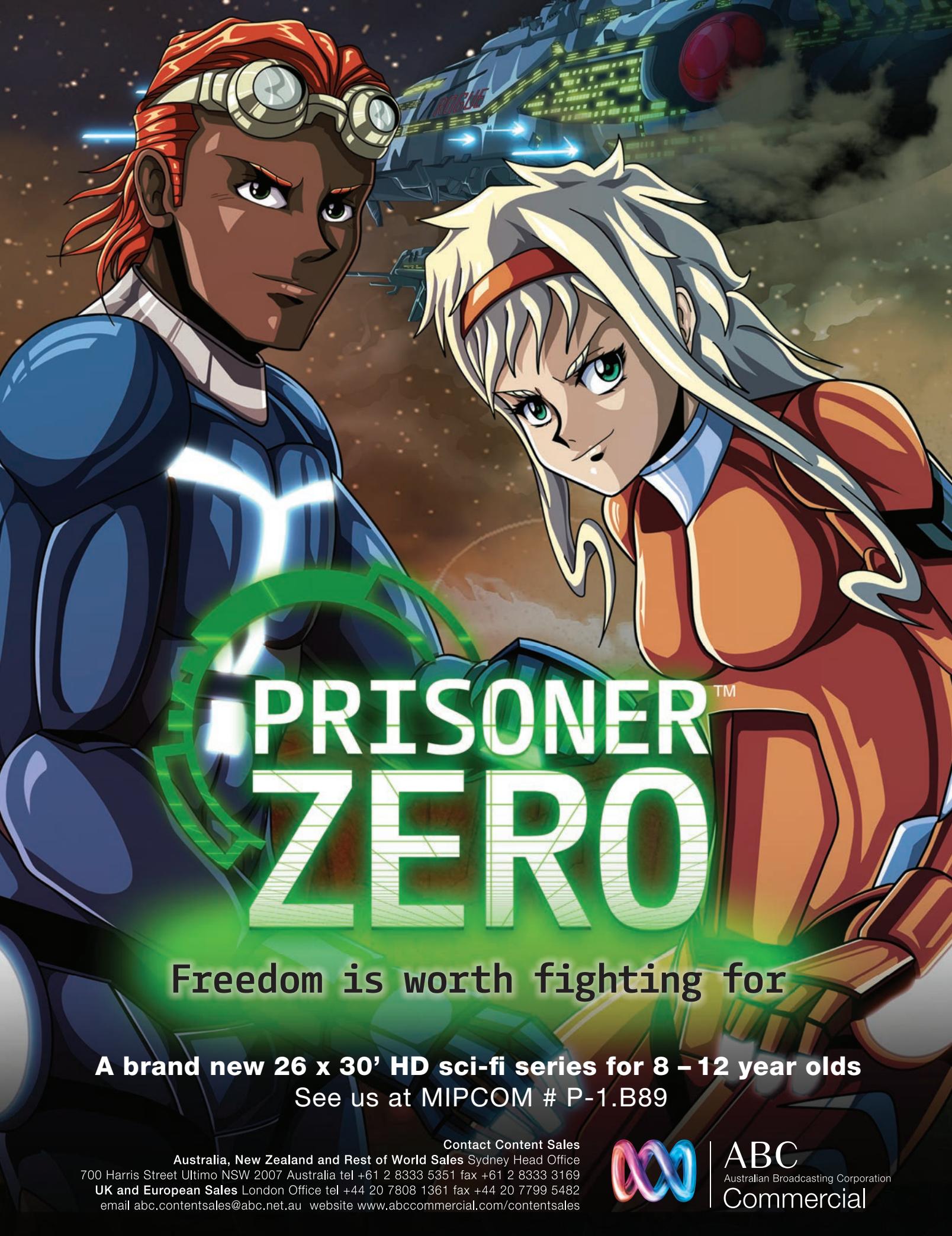
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Outtakes

Bits too good to leave out of the book

I think there's one other out there somewhere—and I will destroy him. House of 'Go Fish' Cards. Snake Eyes can't be a Yankees fan. Nobody's tried to kill me yet, so I guess that's all right. It feels like my life finally started when the show began.

- **Duann Scott** of Shapeways jokes about his unique job title—Designer Evangelist
- **Sean McGowan** of Needham & Co. pitches a concept for Netflix Kids' next potential original series
- **Michael Kelly**, Hasbro exec (and diehard Boston Red Sox fan), on one of the more unusual guidelines for G.I. Joe fan fiction
- A wry comment from **Jean Philippe Randisi** on his first few months as the new CEO of Zodiak Kids
- First-time kids TV writer **David Anaxagoras** on why leaving his preschool teaching gig was the right thing to do



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